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PREFACES,

BIOGRAPHICAL

AND

CRITICAL,

TO THE

WORKS

OF THE

ENGLISH POETS.

BY SAMUEL JOHNSON.

VOLUME THE SECOND.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY J. NICHOLS;

FOR C. BATHURST, J. BUCKLAND, W. STRAHAN, J. RIVINGTON AND SONS, T. DAVIES, T. PAYNE, L. DAVIS, W. OWEN, B. WHITE, S. CROWDER, T. CASLON, T. LONGMAN, B. LAW, E. AND C. DILLY, J. DODSLEY, H. BALDWIN, J. WILKIE, J. ROBSON, J. JOHNSON, T. LOWNDES, T. BECKET, G. ROBINSON, T. CADELL, W. DAVIS, J. NICHOLS, F. NEWBERY, T. EVANS, J. RIDLEY, R. BALDWIN, G. NICOL, LEIGH AND SOTHEBY, J. BEW, N. CONANT, J. MURRAY, W. FOX, J. BOWEN.

M DCC LXXIX.

PREFACES

TO

MILTON

AND

BUTLER.

MILTON.

THE Life of Milton has been already written in ſo many forms, with ſuch minute enquiry, that I might perhaps more properly have contented myſelf with the addition of a few notes to Mr. Fenton's elegant Abridgement, but that a new narrative was thought neceſſary to the uniformity of this edition.

JOHN MILTON was by birth a gentleman, deſcended from the pro-

 prietors

prietors of Milton near Thame in Oxfordſhire, one of whom forfeited his eſtate in the times of York and Lancaſter. Which ſide he took I know not; his deſcendant inherited no veneration for the White Roſe.

His grandfather John was keeper of the foreſt of Shotover, a zealous papiſt, who diſinherited his ſon, becauſe he had forſaken the religion of his anceſtors.

His father, John, who was the ſon diſinherited, had recourſe for his ſupport to the profeſſion of a ſcrivener. He was a man eminent for his ſkill in muſick, many of his compoſitions being ſtill to be found; and his reputation in his profeſſion was ſuch, that he grew rich, and retired to an eſtate. He had probably

bably more than common literature, as his ſon addreſſes him in one of his moſt elaborate Latin poems. He married a gentlewoman of the name of Caſton, a Welſh family, by whom he had two ſons, John the poet, and Chriſtopher who ſtudied the law, and adhered, as the law taught him, to the king's party, for which he was awhile perſecuted, but having, by his brother's intereſt, obtained permiſſion to live in quiet, he ſupported himſelf by chamber-practice, till, ſoon after the acceſſion of king James, he was knighted and made a judge; but, his conſtitution being too weak for buſineſs, he retired before any diſreputable compliances became neceſſary.

He had likewiſe a daughter Anne, whom he married with a conſiderable fortune to Edward Philips, who came from Shrewſbury, and roſe in the Crown-office to be ſecondary: by him ſhe had two ſons, John and Edward, who were educated by the poet, and from whom is derived the only authentick account of his domeſtick manners.

John, the poet, was born in his father's houſe, at the Spread-Eagle in Bread-ſtreet, Dec. 9, 1608, between ſix and ſeven in the morning. His father appears to have been very ſolicitous about his education; for he was inſtructed at firſt by private tuition under the care of Thomas Young, who was afterwards chaplain to the Engliſh merchants

chants at Hamburgh; and of whom we have reaſon to think well, ſince his ſcholar conſidered him as worthy of an epiſtolary Elegy.

He was then ſent to St. Paul's School, under the care of Mr. Gill; and removed, in the beginning of his ſixteenth year, to Chriſt's College in Cambridge, where he entered a fizer, Feb. 12, 1624.

He was at this time eminently ſkilled in the Latin tongue; and he himſelf, by annexing the dates to his firſt compoſitions, a boaſt of which the learned *Politian* had given him an example, ſeems to commend the earlineſs of his own proficiency to the notice of poſterity. But the products of his vernal

fertility have been ſurpaſſed by many, and particularly by his contemporary Cowley. Of the powers of the mind it is difficult to form an eſtimate: many have excelled Milton in their firſt eſſays, who never roſe to works like *Paradiſe Loſt*.

At fifteen, a date which he uſes till he is ſixteen, he tranſlated or verſified two Pſalms, 114 and 136, which he thought worthy of the publick eye; but they raiſe no great expectations: they would in any numerous ſchool have obtained praiſe, but not excited wonder.

Many of his Elegies appear to have been written in his eighteenth year, by which it appears that he had then read the Roman authors with very nice diſcernment.

ment. I once heard Mr. Hampton, the tranſlator of Polybius, remark what I think is true, that Milton was the firſt Engliſhman who, after the revival of letters, wrote Latin verſes with claſſick elegance. If any exceptions can be made, they are very few: Haddon and Aſcham, the pride of Elizabeth's reign, however they may have ſucceeded in proſe, no ſooner attempt verſes than they provoke deriſion. If we produced any thing worthy of notice before the elegies of Milton, it was perhaps *Alablaſter's Roxana*.

Of the exerciſes which the rules of the Univerſity required, ſome were publiſhed by him in his maturer years. They had been undoubtedly applauded, for they

were ſuch as few can perform: yet there is reaſon to ſuſpect that he was regarded in his college with no great fondneſs. That he obtained no fellowſhip is certain; but the unkindneſs with which he was treated was not merely negative. I am aſhamed to relate what I fear is true, that Milton was the laſt ſtudent in either univerſity that ſuffered the publick indignity of corporal correction.

It was, in the violence of controverſial hoſtility, objected to him, that he was expelled: this he readily denies, and it was apparently not true; but it ſeems plain from his own verſes to *Diodati*, that he had incurred *Ruſtication*; a temporary diſmiſſion into the country, with perhaps the loſs of a term:

Jam

Jam nec arundiferum mihi cura reviſere Camum,
Nec dudum vetiti me laris angit amor;
Nec duri libet uſque minas perferre magiſtri,
Cæteraque ingenio non ſubeunda meo.

I cannot find any meaning but this, which even kindneſs and reverence can give to the term, *vetiti laris*, "a habi-"tation from which he is excluded;" or how *exile* can be otherwiſe interpreted. He declares yet more, that he is weary of enduring *the threats of a rigorous maſter, and ſomething elſe, which a temper like his cannot undergo.* What was more than threat was evidently puniſhment. This poem, which mentions his *exile*, proves likewiſe that it was not perpetual; for it concludes with a reſolution of returning ſome time to Cambridge.

He took both the uſual degrees; that of Batchelor in 1628, and that of Maſter in 1632; but he left the univerſity with no kindneſs for its inſtitution, alienated either by the injudicious ſeverity of his governors, or his own captious perverſeneſs. The cauſe cannot now be known, but the effect appears in his writings. His ſcheme of education, inſcribed to *Hartlib*, ſuperſedes all academical inſtruction, being intended to compriſe the whole time which men uſually ſpend in literature, from their entrance upon grammar, *till they proceed, as it is called, maſters of arts.* And in his Diſcourſe *on the likelieſt Way to remove Hirelings out of the Church*, he ingeniouſly propoſes, that *the profits of the lands forfeited by*

the

the act for ſuperſtitious uſes, ſhould be applied to ſuch academies all over the land, where languages and arts may be taught together; ſo that youth may be at once brought up to a competency of learning and an honeſt trade, by which means ſuch of them as had the gift, being enabled to ſupport themſelves (without tithes) by the latter, may, by the help of the former, become worthy preachers.

One of his objections to academical education, as it was then conducted, is, that men deſigned for orders in the Church were permitted to act plays, *writhing and unboning their clergy limbs to all the antick and diſhoneſt geſtures of Trincalos, buffoons and bawds, proſtituting the ſhame of that miniſtry which they had,*

or were near having, to the eyes of courtiers and court-ladies, their grooms and mademoiſelles.

This is ſufficiently peeviſh in a man, who, when he mentions his exile from the college, relates, with great luxuriance, the compenſation which the pleaſures of the theatre afford him. Plays were therefore only criminal, when they were acted by academicks.

He went to the univerſity with a deſign of entering into the church, but in time altered his mind; for he declared, that whoever became a clergyman muſt "ſubſcribe ſlave, and take an oath "withal, which, unleſs he took with a "conſcience that could retch, he muſt "ſtraight perjure himſelf. He thought

"it

"it better to prefer a blameleſs ſilence "before the office of ſpeaking, bought "and begun with ſervitude and for-"ſwearing."

Theſe expreſſions are, I find, applied to the ſubſcription of the Articles; but it ſeems more probable that they relate to canonical obedience. I know not any of the Articles which ſeem to thwart his opinions; but the thoughts of obedience, whether canonical or civil, raiſed his indignation.

His unwillingneſs to engage in the miniſtry, perhaps not yet advanced to a ſettled reſolution of declining it, appears in a letter to one of his friends, who had reproved his ſuſpended and dilatory life, which he ſeems to have im-

imputed to an infatiable curioſity, and fantaſtick luxury of various knowledge. To this he writes a cool and plauſible anſwer, in which he endeavours to perſuade him that the delay proceeds not from the delights of deſultory ſtudy, but from the deſire of obtaining more fitneſs for his taſk; and that he goes on, *not taking thought of being late, ſo it give advantage to be more fit.*

When he left the univerſity, he returned to his father, then reſiding at Horton in Buckinghamſhire, with whom he lived five years; in which time he is ſaid to have read all the Greek and Latin writers. With what limitations this univerſality is to be underſtood, who ſhall inform us?

It

It might be ſuppoſed that he who read ſo much ſhould have done nothing elſe; but Milton found time to write the Maſque of *Comus*, which was preſented at Ludlow, then the reſidence of the Lord Preſident of Wales, in 1634; and had the honour of being acted by the earl of Bridgewater's ſons and daughter. The fiction is derived from Homer's *Circe*; but we never can refuſe to any modern the liberty of borrowing from Homer:

—a quo ceu fonte perenni
Vatum Pieriis ora rigantur aquis.

His next production was *Lycidas*, an elegy, written in 1637, on the death of Mr. King, the ſon of Sir John King, ſecre-

ſecretary for Ireland in the time of Elizabeth, James, and Charles. King was much a favourite at Cambridge, and many of the wits joined to do honour to his memory. Milton's acquaintance with the Italian writers may be diſcovered by a mixture of longer and ſhorter verſes, according to the rules of Tuſcan poetry, and his malignity to the Church by ſome lines which are interpreted as threatening its extermination.

He is ſuppoſed about this time to have written his *Arcades*; for while he lived at Horton he uſed ſometimes to ſteal from his ſtudies a few days, which he ſpent at Harefield, the houſe of the counteſs dowager of Derby, where

where the *Arcades* made part of a dramatick entertainment.

He began now to grow weary of the country; and had ſome purpoſe of taking chambers in the Inns of Court, when the death of his mother ſet him at liberty to travel, for which he obtained his father's conſent, and Sir Henry Wotton's directions, with the celebrated precept of prudence, *i penſieri ſtretti, ed il viſo ſciolto*; "thoughts "cloſe, and looks looſe."

In 1638 he left England, and went firſt to Paris; where, by the favour of lord *Scudamore*, he had the opportunity of viſiting *Grotius*, then reſiding at the French court as ambaſſador from Chriſtina of Sweden. From Paris he haſted

into Italy, of which he had with particular diligence ſtudied the language and literature; and, though he ſeems to have intended a very quick perambulation of the country, ſtaid two months at Florence; where he found his way into the academies, and produced his compoſitions with ſuch applauſe as appears to have exalted him in his own opinion, and confirmed him in the hope, that, "by labour and intenſe ſtudy, which," ſays he, "I take to be my portion in "this life, joined with a ſtrong propen-"ſity of nature, he might leave ſome-"thing ſo written to after-times, as they "ſhould not willingly let it die."

It appears, in all his writings, that he had the uſual concomitant of great abili-

abilities, a lofty and ſteady confidence in himſelf, perhaps not without ſome contempt of others; for ſcarcely any man ever wrote ſo much and praiſed ſo few. Of his praiſe he was very frugal; as he ſet its value high, and conſidered his mention of a name as a ſecurity againſt the waſte of time, and a certain preſervative from oblivion.

At Florence he could not indeed complain that his merit wanted diſtinction. Carlo Dati preſented him with an encomiaſtick inſcription, in the tumid lapidary ſtile; and Francini wrote him an ode, of which the firſt ſtanza is only empty noiſe; the reſt are perhaps too diffuſe on common topicks; but the laſt is natural and beautiful.

From Florence he went to Sienna, and from Sienna to Rome, where he was again received with kindneſs by the Learned and the Great. Holſtenius, the keeper of the Vatican library, who had reſided three years at Oxford, introduced him to cardinal Barberini, and he, at a muſical entertainment, waited for him at the door, and led him by the hand into the aſſembly. Here Selvaggi praiſed him in a diſtich, and Salſilli in a tetraſtick; neither of them of much value. The Italians were gainers by this literary commerce; for the encomiums with which Milton repaid Salſilli, though not ſecure againſt a ſtern grammarian, turn the balance indiſputably in Milton's favour.

Of

Of theſe Italian teſtimonies, poor as they are, he was proud enough to publiſh them before his poems; though he ſays, he cannot be ſuſpected but to have known that they were ſaid *non tam de ſe, quam ſupra ſe.*

At Rome, as at Florence, he ſtaid only two months; a time indeed ſufficient, if he deſired only to ramble with an explainer of its antiquities, or to view palaces and count pictures; but certainly too ſhort for the contemplation of learning, policy, or manners.

From Rome he paſſed on to Naples, in company of a hermit; a companion from whom little could be expected, yet to him Milton owed his introduction to Manſo marquis of Villa, who

had been before the patron of Taſſo. Manſo was enough delighted with his accompliſhments to honour him with a ſorry diſtich, in which he commends him for every thing but his religion; and Milton, in return, addreſſed him in a Latin poem, which muſt have raiſed an high opinion of Engliſh elegance and literature.

His purpoſe was now to have viſited Sicily and Greece; but, hearing of the differences between the king and parliament, he thought it proper to haſten home, rather than paſs his life in foreign amuſements while his countrymen were contending for their rights. He therefore came back to Rome, tho' the merchants informed him of plots laid

laid againſt him by the Jeſuits, for the liberty of his converſations on religion. He had ſenſe enough to judge that there was no danger, and therefore kept on his way, and acted as before, neither obtruding nor ſhunning controverſy. He had perhaps given ſome offence by viſiting Galileo, then a priſoner in the Inquiſition for philoſophical hereſy; and at Naples he was told by Manſo, that, by his declarations on religious queſtions, he had excluded himſelf from ſome diſtinctions which he ſhould otherwiſe have paid him. But ſuch conduct, though it did not pleaſe, was yet ſufficiently ſafe; and Milton ſtaid two months more at Rome, and went on to Florence without moleſtation.

From Florence he viſited Lucca. He afterwards went to Venice; and, having ſent away a collection of muſick and other books, travelled to Geneva, which he probably conſidered as the metropolis of orthodoxy. Here he repoſed, as in a congenial element, and became acquainted with John Diodati and Frederick Spanheim, two learned profeſſors of Divinity. From Geneva he paſſed through France; and came home, after an abſence of a year and three months.

At his return he heard of the death of his friend Charles Diodati; a man whom it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe of great merit, ſince he was thought by Milton worthy of a poem, intituled, *Epitaphium Damonis*, written with the com-

common but childiſh imitation of paſtoral life.

He now hired a lodging at the houſe of one Ruſſel, a taylor in St. Bride's Churchyard, and undertook the education of John and Edward Phillips, his ſiſter's ſons. Finding his rooms too little, he took a houſe and garden in Alderſgate-ſtreet, which was not then ſo much out of the world as it is now; and choſe his dwelling at the upper end of a paſſage, that he might avoid the noiſe of the ſtreet. Here he received more boys, to be boarded and inſtructed.

Let not our veneration for Milton forbid us to look with ſome degree of merriment on great promiſes and ſmall performance, on the man who haſtens home, becauſe

becauſe his countrymen are contending for their liberty, and, when he reaches the ſcene of action, vapours away his patriotiſm in a private boarding-ſchool. This is the period of his life from which all his biographers ſeem inclined to ſhrink. They are unwilling that Milton ſhould be degraded to a ſchool-maſter; but ſince it cannot be denied that he taught boys, one finds out that he taught for nothing, and another that his motive was only zeal for the propagation of learning and virtue; and all tell what they do not know to be true, only to excuſe an act which no wiſe man will conſider as in itſelf diſgraceful. His father was alive; his allowance was not ample, and he ſupplied its deficien-

cies

cies by an honeſt and uſeful employment.

It is told, that in the art of education he performed wonders; and a formidable liſt is given of the authors, Greek and Latin, that were read in Alderſgate-ſtreet, by youth between ten and fifteen or ſixteen years of age. Thoſe who tell or receive theſe ſtories, ſhould conſider that nobody can be taught faſter than he can learn. The ſpeed of the beſt horſeman muſt be limited by the power of his horſe. Every man, that has ever undertaken to inſtruct others, can tell what ſlow advances he has been able to make, and how much patience it requires to recall vagrant inattention, to ſtimulate ſluggiſh indifference,

ference, and to rectify abſurd miſapprehenſion.

The purpoſe of Milton, as it ſeems, was to teach ſomething more ſolid than the common literature of ſchools, by reading thoſe authors that treat of phyſical ſubjects; ſuch as the Georgick, and aſtronomical treatiſes of the ancients. This was a ſcheme of improvement which ſeems to have buſied many literary projectors of that age. Cowley, who had more means than Milton of knowing what was wanting to the embelliſhments of life, formed the ſame plan of education in his imaginary College.

But the truth is, that the knowledge of external nature, and of the ſciences

which

which that knowledge requires or includes, is not the great or the frequent buſineſs of the human mind. Whether we provide for action or converſation, whether we wiſh to be uſeful or pleaſing, the firſt requiſite is the religious and moral knowledge of right and wrong; the next is an acquaintance with the hiſtory of mankind, and with thoſe examples which may be ſaid to embody truth, and prove by events the reaſonableneſs of opinions. Prudence and juſtice are virtues, and excellencies, of all times, and of all places; we are perpetually moraliſts, but we are geometricians only by chance. Our intercourſe with intellectual nature is neceſſary; our ſpeculations upon matter are voluntary, and at leiſure.

leiſure. Phyſical knowledge is of ſuch rare emergence, that one man may know another half his life without being able to eſtimate his ſkill in hydroſtaticks or aſtronomy; but his moral and prudential character immediately appears.

Thoſe authors, therefore, are to be read at ſchools that ſupply moſt axioms of prudence, moſt principles of moral truth, and moſt materials for converſation; and theſe purpoſes are beſt ſerved by poets, orators, and hiſtorians.

Let me not be cenſured for this digreſſion as pedantick or paradoxical; for if I have Milton againſt me, I have Socrates on my ſide. It was his labour to turn philoſophy from the ſtudy of nature to ſpeculations upon life, but the

inno-

innovators whom I oppoſe are turning off attention from life to nature. They ſeem to think, that we are placed here to watch the growth of plants, or the motions of the ſtars. Socrates was rather of opinion, that what we had to learn was, how to do good, and avoid evil.

Ὅτ[ι τοι ἐν μ]εγάροισι κακὸν [ἀγαθόν]ε τέτυκ[ται.

Of inſtitutions we may judge by their effects. From this wonder-working academy, I do not know that there ever proceeded any man very eminent for knowledge: its only genuine product, I believe, is a ſmall Hiſtory of Poetry, written in Latin by his nephew, of which perhaps none of my readers has ever heard.

That

That in his ſchool, as in every thing elſe which he undertook, he laboured with great diligence, there is no reaſon for doubting. One part of his method deſerves general imitation. He was careful to inſtruct his ſcholars in religion. Every Sunday was ſpent upon theology; in which he dictated a ſhort ſyſtem, gathered from the writers that were then faſhionable in the Dutch univerſities.

His ſet his pupils an example of hard ſtudy and ſpare diet; only now and then he allowed himſelf to paſs a day of feſtivity and indulgence with ſome gay gentlemen of Gray's Inn.

He now began to engage in the controverſies of the times, and lent his breath

breath to blow the flames of contention. In 1641 he publiſhed a treatiſe of *Reformation* in two books, againſt the eſtabliſhed Church; being willing to help the Puritans, who were, he ſays, *inferior to the Prelates in learning*.

Hall biſhop of Norwich had publiſhed an *Humble Remonſtrance*, in defence of Epiſcopacy; to which, in 1641, ſix miniſters, of whoſe names the firſt letters made the celebrated word *Smectymnus*, gave their Anſwer. Of this Anſwer a Confutation was attempted by the learned *Uſher*; and to the Confutation Milton publiſhed a Reply, intituled, *Of Prelatical Epiſcopacy, and whether it may be deduced from the Apoſtolical Times, by virtue of thoſe teſtimonies which*

are alleged to that purpose in some late treatises, one whereof goes under the name of James lord bishop of Armagh.

I have transcribed this title to shew, by his contemptuous mention of Usher, that he had now adopted the puritanical savageness of manners. His next work was, *The Reason of Church Government urged against Prelacy, by Mr. John Milton*, 1642. In this book he discovers, not with ostentatious exultation, but with calm confidence, his high opinion of his own powers; and promises to undertake something, he yet knows not what, that may be of use and honour to his country. "This," says he, "is "not to be obtained but by devout "prayer to that Eternal Spirit that can

"enrich

"enrich with all utterance and know-
"ledge, and ſends out his Seraphim
"with the hallowed fire of his altar, to
"touch and purify the lips of whom
"he pleaſes. To this muſt be added,
"induſtrious and ſelect reading, ſteady
"obſervation, and inſight into all ſeem-
"ly and generous arts and affairs; till
"which in ſome meaſure be compaſt, I
"refuſe not to ſuſtain this expectation."
From a promiſe like this, at once ſer-
vid, pious, and rational, might be ex-
pected the *Paradiſe Loſt*.

He publiſhed the ſame year two more pamphlets, upon the ſame queſtion. To one of his antagoniſts, who affirms that he was *vomited out of the univerſity*, he anſwers, in general terms;

"The Fellows of the College wherein I "ſpent ſome years, at my parting, after "I had taken two degrees, as the man-"ner is, ſignified many times how much "better it would content them that I "ſhould ſtay.—As for the common ap-"probation or diſlike of that place, as "now it is, that I ſhould eſteem or diſ-"eſteem myſelf the more for that, too "ſimple is the anſwerer, if he think to "obtain with me. Of ſmall practice "were the phyſician who could not "judge, by what ſhe and her ſiſter have "of long time vomited, that the worſer "ſtuff ſhe ſtrongly keeps in her ſtomach, "but the better ſhe is ever keeking at, "and is queaſy: ſhe vomits now out of "ſickneſs; but before it be well with

"her,

"her, ſhe muſt vomit by ſtrong phyſick. "—The univerſity, in the time of her "better health, and my younger judge-"ment, I never greatly admired, but "now much leſs."

This is ſurely the language of a man who thinks that he has been injured. He proceeds to deſcribe the courſe of his conduct, and the train of his thoughts; and, becauſe he has been ſuſpected of incontinence, gives an account of his own purity: "That if I "be juſtly charged," ſays he, "with "this crime, it may come upon me with "tenfold ſhame."

The ſtile of his piece is rough, and ſuch perhaps was that of his antagoniſt. This roughneſs he juſtifies, by great ex-

amples, in a long digreſſion. Sometimes he tries to be humorous: "Leſt I ſhould "take him for ſome chaplain in hand, "ſome ſquire of the body to his pre-"late, one who ſerves not at the altar "only but at the Court-cupboard, he "will beſtow on us a pretty model of "himſelf; and ſets me out half a dozen "epiſtolical mottos, wherever he had them, "hopping ſhort in the meaſure of con-"vulſion fits; in which labour the "agony of his wit having ſcaped nar-"rowly, inſtead of well-ſized periods, "he greets us with a quantity of "thumbring poſies.—And thus ends this "ſection, or rather diſſection of him-"ſelf." Such is the controverſial merriment of Milton: his gloomy ſeriouſ-

neſs

ness is yet more offensive. Such is his malignity, *that hell grows darker at his frown.*

His father, after Reading was taken by *Essex*, came to reside in his house; and his school increased. At Whitsuntide, in his thirty-fifth year, he married Mary, the daughter of Mr. Powel, a justice of the peace in Oxfordshire. He brought her to town with him, and expected all the advantages of a conjugal life. The lady, however, seems not much to have delighted in the pleasures of spare diet and hard study: for, as Phillips relates, "having for a month led "a philosophical life, after having been "used at home to a great house, and "much company and joviality, her

"friends, poſſibly by her own deſire, "made earneſt ſuit to have her company "the remaining part of the ſummer; "which was granted, upon a promiſe of "her return at Michaelmas."

Milton was too buſy to much miſs his wife: he purſued his ſtudies; and now and then viſited the lady Margaret Leigh, whom he has mentioned in one of his ſonnets. At laſt Michaelmas arrived; but the lady had no inclination to return to the ſullen gloom of her huſband's habitation, and therefore very willingly forgot her promiſe. He ſent her a letter, but had no anſwer; he ſent more with the ſame ſucceſs. It could be alleged that letters miſcarry; he therefore diſpatched a meſſenger, being by

this

this time too angry to go himſelf. His meſſenger was ſent back with ſome contempt. The family of the lady were Cavaliers.

In a man whoſe opinion of his own merit was like Milton's, leſs provocation than this might have raiſed violent reſentment. Milton ſoon determined to repudiate her for diſobedience; and, being one of thoſe who could eaſily find arguments to juſtify inclination, publiſhed (in 1644) *The Doctrine and Diſcipline of Divorce*; which was followed by *The Judgement of Martin Bucer concerning Divorce*; and the next year, his Tetrachordon, *Expoſitions upon the four chief Places of Scripture which treat of Marrigge*.

This

This innovation was oppoſed, as might be expected, by the clergy; who, then holding their famous aſſembly at Weſtminſter, procured that the author ſhould be called before the Lords; "but "that houſe," ſays Wood, "whether "approving the doctrine, or not favour-"ing his accuſers, did ſoon diſmiſs "him."

There ſeems not to have been much written againſt him, nor any thing by any writer of eminence. The antagoniſt that appeared is ſtiled by him, *a Serving-man turned Solicitor*. *Howel* in his letters mentions the new doctrine with contempt; and it was, I ſuppoſe, thought more worthy of deriſion than of confutation. He complains of this neglect

neglect in two ſonnets, of which the firſt is contemptible, and the ſecond not excellent.

From this time it is obſerved that he became an enemy to the Preſbyterians whom he had favoured before. He that changes his party by his humour, is not more virtuous than he that changes it by his intereſt; he loves himſelf rather than truth.

His wife and her relations now found that Milton was not an unreſiſting ſufferer of injuries; and perceiving that he had begun to put his doctrine in practice, by courting a young woman of great accompliſhments, the daughter of one Doctor Davis, who was however not ready to comply, they reſolved

to

to endeavour a re-union. He went ſometimes to the houſe of one Blackborough, his relation, in the lane of St. Martin's-le-Grand, and at one of his uſual viſits was ſurpriſed to ſee his wife come from another room, and implore forgiveneſs on her knees. He reſiſted her intreaties for awhile; "but partly," ſays Philips, "his own generous nature, more "inclinable to reconciliation than to per-"ſeverance in anger or revenge, and "partly the ſtrong interceſſion of friends "on both ſides, ſoon brought him to "an act of oblivion and a firm league "of peace." It were injurious to omit, that Milton afterwards received her father and her brothers in his own houſe, when

when they were diſtreſſed, with other Royaliſts.

He publiſhed about the ſame time his *Areopagitica, a Speech of Mr.* John Milton *for the liberty of unlicenſed Printing*. The danger of ſuch unbounded liberty, and the danger of bounding it, have produced a problem in the ſcience of Government, which human underſtanding ſeems hitherto unable to ſolve. If nothing may be publiſhed but what civil authority ſhall have previouſly approved, power muſt always be the ſtandard of truth; if every dreamer of innovations may propagate his projects, there can be no ſettlement; if every murmurer at government may diffuſe diſcontent, there can be no peace; and if every ſceptick

in

in theology may teach his follies, there can be no religion. The remedy against these evils is to punish the authors; for it is yet allowed that every society may punish, though not prevent, the publication of opinions, which that society shall think pernicious: but this punishment, though it may crush the author, promotes the book; and it seems not more reasonable to leave the right of printing unrestrained, because writers may be afterwards censured, than it would be to sleep with doors unbolted, because by our laws we can hang a thief.

But whatever were his engagements, civil or domestick, poetry was never long out of his thoughts. About this

time

time (1645) a collection of his Latin and English poems appeared, in which the *Allegro* and *Penseroso*, with some others, were first published.

He had taken a larger house in Barbican for the reception of scholars; but the numerous relations of his wife, to whom he generously granted refuge for a while, occupied his rooms. In time, however, they went away; and then "house again," says Philips, "now "looked like a house of the Muses only, "though the accession of scholars was "not great. Possibly his having pro- "ceeded so far in the education of "youth, may have been the occasion of "his adversaries calling him pedagogue "and school-master, whereas it is well

"known

"known he never ſet up for a publick "ſchool, to teach all the young fry of "a pariſh; but only was willing to im- "part his learning and knowledge to "relations, and the ſons of gentlemen "who were his intimate friends; and "that neither his writings nor his way "of teaching ever favoured in the leaſt "of pedantry."

Thus laborioufly does his nephew extenuate what cannot be denied, and what might be confeſſed without diſgrace. Milton was not a man who could become mean by a mean employment. This, however, his warmeſt friends ſeem not to have found; they therefore ſhift and palliate. He did not ſell literature to all comers at an open ſhop; he was a cham-

a chamber-milliner, and meaſured his commodities only to his friends.

Philips, evidently impatient of viewing him in this ſtate of degradation, tells us that it was not long continued; and, to raiſe his character again, has a mind to inveſt him with military ſplendour: "He is much miſtaken," he ſays, "if there was not about this time a de-"ſign of making him an adjutant-"general in Sir William Waller's army. "But the new-modelling of the army "proved an obſtruction to the deſign." An event cannot be ſet at a much greater diſtance than by having been only *deſigned, about ſome time*, if a man *be not much miſtaken*. Milton ſhall be a pedagogue no longer; for, if Philips

be not miſtaken, ſomebody at ſome time deſigned him for a ſoldier.

About the time that the army was new-modelled (1645) he removed to a ſmaller houſe in Holbourn, which opened backward into Lincoln's-Inn-Fields. He is not known to have publiſhed any thing afterwards till the king's death, when, finding his murderers condemned by the Preſbyterians, he wrote a treatiſe to juſtify it, and *to compoſe the minds of the people.*

He made ſome *Remarks on the Articles of Peace between Ormond and the Iriſh Rebels.* While he contented himſelf to write, he perhaps did only what his conſcience dictated; and if he did not very vigilantly watch the influence of his

his own paſſions, and the gradual prevalence of opinions, firſt willingly admitted and then habitually indulged, if objections, by being overlooked, were forgotten, and deſire ſuperinduced conviction, he yet ſhared only the common weakneſs of mankind, and might be no leſs ſincere than his opponents. But as faction ſeldom leaves a man honeſt, however, it might find him, Milton is ſuſpected of having interpolated the book called *Icon Baſilike*, which the Council of State, to whom he was now made Latin ſecretary, employed him to cenſure, by inſerting a prayer, taken from *Sidney's Arcadia*, and imputing it to the king; whom he charges, in his *Iconoclaſtes*, with the uſe of this prayer as with a heavy

crime, in the indecent language with which proſperity had emboldened the advocates for rebellion to inſult all that is venerable or great: "Who would have "imagined ſo little fear in him of the "true all-ſeeing Deity—as, immediately "before his death, to pop into the "hands of the grave biſhop that at-"tended him, as a ſpecial relique of "his ſaintly exerciſes, a prayer ſtolen "word for word from the mouth of a "heathen woman praying to a heathen "god?"

The papers which the king gave to Dr. Juxon on the ſcaffold the regicides took away, ſo that they were at leaſt the publiſhers of this prayer; and Dr. Birch, who examined the queſtion with great

great care, was inclined to think them the forgers. The uſe of it by adaptation was innocent; and they who could ſo nobly cenſure it, with a little extenſion of their malice could contrive what they wanted to accuſe.

King Charles the Second, being now ſheltered in Holland, employed Salmaſius, profeſſor of Polite Learning at Leyden, to write a defence of his father and of monarchy; and, to excite his induſtry, gave him, as was reported, a hundred Jacobuſes. Salmaſius was a man of ſkill in languages, knowledge of antiquity, and ſagacity of emendatory criticiſm, almoſt exceeding all hope of human attainment; and having, by exceſſive praiſes, been confirmed in great

confidence of himſelf, though he probably had not much conſidered the principles of ſociety or the rights of government, undertook the employment without diſtruſt of his own qualifications; and, as his expedition in writing was wonderful, in 1649 publiſhed *Defenſio Regis*.

To this Milton was required to write a ſufficient anſwer; which he performed (1651) in ſuch a manner, that Hobbes declared himſelf unable to decide whoſe language was beſt, or whoſe arguments were worſt. In my opinion, Milton's periods are ſmoother, neater, and more pointed; but he delights himſelf with teizing his adverſary as much as with confuting him. He makes a foolish allusion of Salm-

Salmaſius, whoſe doctrine he conſiders as ſervile and unmanly, to the ſtream of *Salmacis*, which whoever entered left half his virility behind him. Salmaſius was a Frenchman, and was unhappily married to a ſcold. *Tu es Gallus*, ſays Milton, *et, ut aiunt, nimium gallinaceus.* But his ſupreme pleaſure is to tax his adverſary, ſo renowned for criticiſm, with vitious Latin. He opens his book with telling that he has uſed *Perſona*, which, according to Milton, ſignifies only a *Maſk*, in a ſenſe not known to the Romans, by applying it as we apply *Perſon*. But as Nemeſis is always on the watch, it is memorable that he has enforced the charge of a ſoleciſm by an expreſſion in itſelf groſsly ſoleciſtical,

when, for one of thoſe ſuppoſed blunders, he ſays, *propino te grammatiſtis tuis vapulandum*. From *vapulo*, which has a paſſive ſenſe, *vapulandus* can never be derived. No man forgets his original trade: the rights of nations, and of kings, ſink into queſtions of grammar, if grammarians diſcuſs them.

Milton when he undertook this anſwer was weak of body, and dim of ſight; but his will was forward, and what was wanting of health was ſupplied by zeal. He was rewarded with a thouſand pounds, and his book was much read; for paradox, recommended by ſpirit and elegance, eaſily gains attention; and he who told every man that he

was equal to his king, could hardly want an audience.

That the performance of Salmaſius was not diſperſed with equal rapidity, or read with equal eagerneſs, is very credible. He taught only the ſtale doctrine of authority, and the unpleaſing duty of ſubmiſſion; and he had been ſo long not only the monarch but the tyrant of literature, that almoſt all mankind were delighted to find him defied and inſulted by a new name, not yet conſidered as any one's rival. If Chriſtina, as is ſaid, commended the *Defence of the People*, her purpoſe muſt be to torment Salmaſius, who was then at her Court; for neither her civil ſtation nor her natual character could diſpoſe her to favour

favour the doctrine, who was by birth a queen, and by temper deſpotick.

That Salmaſius was, from the appearance of Milton's book, treated with neglect, there is not much proof; but to a man ſo long accuſtomed to admiration, a little praiſe of his antagoniſt would be ſufficiently offenſive, and might incline him to leave Sweden.

He prepared a reply, which, left as it was imperfect, was publiſhed by his ſon in the year of the Reſtauration. In the beginning, being probably moſt in pain for his Latinity, he endeavours to defend his uſe of the word *perſona*; but, if I remember right, he miſſes a better authority than any that he has found, that of Juvenal in his fourth ſatire:

— Quid

—Quid agas cum dira & fœdior omni
Crimine *Perſona* eſt?

As Salmaſius reproached Milton with loſing his eyes in the quarrel, Milton delighted himſelf with the belief that he had ſhortened Salmaſius's life, and both perhaps with more malignity than reaſon. Salmaſius died at the Spa, Sept. 3, 1653; and as controvertiſts are commonly ſaid to be killed by their laſt diſpute, Milton was flattered with the credit of deſtroying him.

Cromwel had now diſmiſſed the parliament by the authority of which he had deſtroyed monarchy, and commenced monarch himſelf, under the title of protector, but with kingly and more than kingly power. That his authority was law-

lawful, never was pretended; he himself founded his right only in neceſſity; but Milton, having now taſted the honey of publick employment, would not return to hunger and philoſophy, but, continuing to exerciſe his office under a manifeſt uſurpation, betrayed to his power that liberty which he had defended. Nothing can be more juſt than that rebellion ſhould end in ſlavery; that he, who had juſtified the murder of his king, for ſome acts which to him ſeemed unlawful, ſhould now ſell his ſervices, and his flatteries, to a tyrant, of whom it was evident that he could do nothing lawful.

He had now been blind for ſome years; but his vigour of intellect was ſuch,

ſuch, that he was not diſabled to diſcharge his office, or continue his controverſies. His mind was too eager to be diverted, and too ſtrong to be ſubdued.

About this time his firſt wife died in childbed, having left him three daughters. As he probably did not much love her, he did not long continue the appearance of lamenting her; but after a ſhort time married Catherine, the daughter of one captain Woodcock of Hackney; a woman doubtleſs educated in opinions like his own. She died within a year, of childbirth, or ſome diſtemper that followed it; and her huſband has honoured her memory with a poor ſonnet.

The

The firſt Reply to Milton's *Defenſio Populi* was publiſhed in 1651, called *Apologia pro Rege & Populo Anglicano, contra Johannis Polypragmatici (alias Miltoni) defenſionem deſtructivam Regis & Populi.* Of this the author was not known; but Milton and his nephew Philips, under whoſe name he publiſhed an anſwer ſo much corrected by him that it might be called his own, imputed it to Bramhal; and, knowing him no friend to regicides, thought themſelves at liberty to treat him as if they had known what they only ſuſpected.

Next year appeared *Regii Sanguinis clamor ad Cœlum.* Of this the author was Peter du Moulin, who was afterwards prebendary of Canterbury; but Morus,

or

or More, a French miniſter, having the care of its publication, was treated as the writer by Milton, in his *Defenſio Secunda*, and overwhelmed by ſuch violence of invective, that he began to ſhrink under the tempeſt, and gave his perſecutors the means of knowing the true author. Du Moulin was now in great danger; but Milton's pride operated againſt his malignity, and both he and his friends were more willing that Du Moulin ſhould eſcape than that he ſhould be convicted of miſtake.

In this ſecond Defence he ſhews that his eloquence is not merely ſatirical; the rudeneſs of his invective is equalled by the groſſneſs of his flattery. "Deferimur, Cromuelle, tu ſolus ſuperes, "ad

" ad te ſumma noſtrarum rerum rediit,
" in te ſolo conſiſtit, inſuperabili tuæ
" virtuti cediimus cuncti, nemine vel
" obloquente, niſi qui æquales inæqua-
" lis ipſe honores ſibi quærit, aut dig-
" niori conceſſos invidet, aut non intel-
" ligit nihil eſſe in ſocietate hominum
" magis vel Deo gratum, vel rationi
" conſentaneum, eſſe in civitate nihil
" æquius, nihil utilius, quam potiri
" rerum digniſſimum. Eum te agno-
" ſcunt omnes, Cromuelle, ea tu civis
" maximus et * glorioſiſſimus, dux pub-
" lici conſilii, exercituum fortiſſimorum

* It may be doubted whether *glorioſiſſimus* be here uſed with Milton's boaſted purity. *Res glorioſa* is an *illuſtrious thing*; but *vir glorioſus* is commonly a *braggart*, as in *miles glorioſus*.

" im-

"imperator, pater patriæ geſſiſti. Sic "tu ſpontanea bonorum omnium et ani- "mitus miſſa voce ſalutaris."

Cæſar, when he aſſumed the perpetual dictatorſhip, had not more ſervile or more elegant flattery. A tranſlation may ſhew its ſervility; but its elegance is leſs attainable. Having expoſed the unkilfulneſs or ſelfiſhneſs of the former government, "We were left," ſays Milton, "to ourſelves: the whole na- "tional intereſt fell into your hands, "and ſubſiſts in your abilities. To your "virtue, overpowering and reſiſtleſs, "every man gives way, except ſome "who, without equal qualifications, "aſpire to equal honours, or who envy "the diſtinctions of merit greater than

"their own; or who have yet to learn,
"that in the coalition of human ſociety
"nothing is more pleaſing to God, or
"more agreeable to reaſon, than that
"the higheſt mind ſhould have the
"ſovereign power. Such, Sir, are
"you by general confeſſion; ſuch are
"the things atchieved by you, the
"greateſt and moſt glorious of our
"countrymen, the director of our pub-
"lick counſels, the leader of uncon-
"quered armies, the father of your
"country; for by that title does every
"good man hail you, with ſincere and
"voluntary praiſe."

Next year, having defended all that wanted defence, he found leiſure to defend himſelf. He undertook his own

vindication againſt More, whom he declares in his title to be juſtly called the author of the *Regii Sanguini clamor*. In this there is no want of vehemence nor eloquence, nor does he forget his wonted wit. "Morus es? an Momus? an "utrumque idem eſt?" He then remembers that *Morus* is Latin for a Mulberry-tree, and hints at the known transformation:

—Poma alba ferebat
Quæ poſt nigra tulit Morus.

With this piece ended his controverſies; and he from this time gave himſelf up to his private ſtudies and his civil employment.

As ſecretary to the Protector he is ſuppoſed to have written the Declara-

tion of the reaſons for a war with Spain. His agency was conſidered as of great importance; for when a treaty with Sweden was artfully ſuſpended, the delay was publickly imputed to Mr. Milton's indiſpoſition; and the Swediſh agent was provoked to expreſs his wonder, that only one man in England could write Latin, and that man blind.

Being now forty-ſeven years old, and ſeeing himſelf diſencumbered from external interruptions, he ſeems to have recollected his former purpoſes, and planned three great works for his future employment. An epick poem, the hiſtory of his country, and a dictionary of the Latin tongue.

To

To collect a dictionary ſeems a work of all others leaſt practicable in a ſtate of blindneſs, becauſe it depends upon perpetual and minute inſpection and collation. Nor would Milton probably have begun it, after he had loſt his eyes; but, having had it always before him, he continued it, ſays Philips, *almoſt to his dying-day; but the papers were ſo diſcompoſed and deficient, that they could not be fitted for the preſs.* The compilers of the Latin dictionary, printed afterwards at Cambridge, had the uſe of them in three folios; but what was their fate afterwards is not known.

To compile a hiſtory from various authors, when they can only be conſulted by other eyes, is not eaſy, nor poſſible, but

with more ſkilful and attentive help than can be commonly obtained; and it was probably the difficulty of conſulting and comparing that ſtopped Milton's narrative at the Conqueſt; a period at which affairs were not yet very intricate, nor authors very numerous.

For the ſubject of his epick poem, after much deliberation, *long chuſing, and beginning late,* he fixed upon *Paradiſe Loſt*; a deſign ſo comprehenſive, that it could be juſtified only by ſucceſs. He had once deſigned to celebrate king Arthur, as appears from his verſes to Manſus; but Arthur was reſerved, ſays Fenton, to another deſtiny.

It appears, by ſome ſketches of poetical projects left in manuſcript, and to be

be ſeen in a library at Cambridge, that he had digeſted his thoughts on this ſubject into one of thoſe wild dramas which were anciently called Myſteries; and Philips had ſeen what he terms part of a tragedy, beginning with the firſt ten lines of Satan's addreſs to the Sun. Theſe myſteries conſiſt of allegorical perſons; ſuch as *Juſtice*, *Mercy*, *Faith*. Of the tragedy or myſtery of *Paradiſe Loſt* there are two plans:

The Perſons.	The Perſons.
Michael.	Moſes.
Chorus of Angels.	Divine Juſtice, Wiſdom, Heavenly Love.
Heavenly Love.	
Lucifer.	
Adam, Eve, with the Serpent.	The Evening Star, Heſperus.

Conſcience.
Death.
Labour,
Sickneſs,
Diſcontent,
Ignorance,
with others,
Mutes.
Faith.
Hope.
Charity.

Chorus of Angels.
Lucifer.
Adam.
Eve.
Conſcience.
Labour,
Sickneſs,
Diſcontent,
Ignorance,
Fear,
Death,
Mutes.
Faith.
Hope.
Charity.

Paradiſe Loſt.

The Perſons.

Moſes, προλογίζει, recounting how he aſſumed his true body; that it corrupts not, becauſe it is with God in the mount; declares the like of Enoch and Eliah;

Eliah, beſides the purity of the place, that certain pure winds, dews and clouds, preſerve it from corruption; whence exhorts to the ſight of God; tells, they cannot ſee Adam in the ſtate of innocence, by reaſon of their ſin.

Juſtice,
Mercy,
Wiſdom,
} debating what ſhould become of man, if he fall.

Chorus of Angels ſinging a hymn of the Creation.

ACT II.

Heavenly Love.

Evening Star.

Chorus ſing the marriage-ſong, and deſcribe Paradiſe.

ACT

ACT III.

Lucifer, contriving Adam's ruin.

Chorus fears for Adam, and relates Lucifer's rebellion and fall.

ACT IV.

Adam, Eve, } fallen.

Conſcience cites them to God's examination.

Chorus bewails, and tells the good Adam has loſt.

ACT V.

Adam and Eve driven out of Paradiſe.

— — preſented by an angel with

Labour, Grief, Hatred, Envy, War, Famine, Peſtilence, Sickneſs, Diſcontent, Ignorance, Fear, Death, } Mutes.

To

To whom he gives their names. Likewiſe Winter, Heat, Tempeſt, &c.

Faith,
Hope,
Charity,
} comfort him, and inſtruct him.

Chorus briefly concludes.

Such was his firſt deſign, which could have produced only an allegory, or myſtery. The following ſketch ſeems to have attained more maturity.

Adam unparadiſed:

The angel Gabriel, either deſcending or entering; ſhewing, ſince this globe was created, his frequency as much on earth as in heaven: deſcribes Paradiſe. Next, the Chorus, ſhewing the reaſon of

of his coming to keep his watch in Paradise, after Lucifer's rebellion, by command from God; and withal expressing his desire to see and know more concerning this excellent new creature, man. The angel Gabriel, as by his name signifying a prince of power, tracing Paradise with a more free office, passes by the station of the Chorus, and, desired by them, relates what he knew of man; as the creation of Eve, with their love and marriage. After this, Lucifer appears, after his overthrow; bemoans himself, seeks revenge on man. The Chorus prepare resistance at his first approach. At last, after discourse of enmity on either side, he departs; whereat the Chorus sings of the battle and victo-

victory in heaven, againſt him and his accomplices: as before, after the firſt act, was ſung a hymn of the creation. Here again may appear Lucifer, relating and inſulting in what he had done to the deſtruction of man. Man next, and Eve having by this time been ſeduced by the Serpent, appears confuſedly covered with leaves. Conſcience, in a ſhape, accuſes him; Juſtice cites him to the place whither Jehovah called for him. In the mean while, the Chorus entertains the ſtage, and is informed by ſome angel the manner of the Fall. Here the Chorus bewails Adam's fall; Adam then and Eve return; accuſe one another; but eſpecially Adam lays the blame to his wife; is ſtubborn in his offence.

fence. Juſtice appears, reaſons with him, convinces him. The Chorus admoniſheth Adam, and bids him beware Lucifer's example of impenitence. The angel is ſent to baniſh them out of Paradiſe; but before cauſes to paſs before his eyes, in ſhapes, a maſk of all the evils of this life and world. He is humbled, relents, deſpairs: at laſt appears Mercy, comforts him, promiſes the Meſſiah; then calls in Faith, Hope, and Charity; inſtructs him; he repents, gives God the glory, ſubmits to his penalty. The Chorus briefly concludes. Compare this with the former draught."

These are very imperfect rudiments of *Paradiſe Loſt*; but it is pleaſant to

ſee

ſee great works in their ſeminal ſtate, pregnant with latent poſſibilities of excellence; nor could there be any more delightful entertainment than to trace their gradual growth and expanſion, and to obſerve how they are ſometimes ſuddenly advanced by accidental hints, and ſometimes ſlowly improved by ſteady meditation.

Invention is almoſt the only literary labour which blindneſs cannot obſtruct, and therefore he naturally ſolaced his ſolitude by the indulgence of his fancy, and the melody of his numbers. He had done what he knew to be neceſſarily previous to poetical excellence; he had made himſelf acquainted with *ſeemly arts and affairs*; his comprehenſion was

ex-

extended by various knowledge, and his memory ſtored with intellectual treaſures. He was ſkilled in many languages, and had by reading and compoſition attained the full maſtery of his own. He would have wanted little help from books, had he retained the power of peruſing them.

But while his greater deſigns were advancing, having now, like many other authors, caught the love of publication, he amuſed himſelf, as he could, with little productions. He ſent to the preſs (1658) a manuſcript of Raleigh, called the *Cabinet Council*; and next year gratified his malevolence to the clergy, by a *Treatiſe of Civil Power in Eccleſiaſtical Caſes*,

Cafes, and the Means of removing Hirelings out of the Church.

Oliver was now dead; Richard was conſtrained to reſign: the ſyſtem of extemporary government, which had been held together only by force, naturally fell into fragments when that force was taken away; and Milton ſaw himſelf and his cauſe in equal danger. But he had ſtill hope of doing ſomething. He wrote letters, which Toland has publiſhed, to ſuch men as he thought friends to the new commonwealth; and even in the year of the Reſtoration he *hated no jot of heart or hope*, but was fantaſtical enough to think that the nation, agitated as it was, might be ſettled by a pamphlet, called *A ready and eaſy Way to eſtabliſh a*

Free Commonwealth; which was, however, enough considered to be both seriously and ludicrously answered.

The obstinate enthusiasm of the commonwealthmen was very remarkable. When the king was apparently returning, Harrington, with a few associates as fanatical as himself, used to meet, with all the gravity of political importance, to settle an equal government by rotation; and Milton, kicking when he could strike no longer, was foolish enough to publish, a few weeks before the Restoration, *Notes* upon a sermon preached by one Griffiths, intituled, *The Fear of God and the King*. To these notes an answer was written by L'Estrange, in

in a pamphlet petulantly called *No blind Guides*.

But whatever Milton could write, or men of greater activity could do, the king was now evidently approaching with the irreſiſtible approbation of the people. He was therefore no longer ſecretary, and was conſequently obliged to quit the houſe which he held by his office; and, proportioning his ſenſe of danger to his opinion of the importance of his writings, thought it convenient to ſeek ſome ſhelter, and hid himſelf for a time in Bartholomew Cloſe by Weſt Smithfield.

I cannot but remark a kind of reſpect, perhaps unconſciouſly, paid to this great man by his biographers: every houſe

in which he reſided is hiſtorically mentioned, as if it were an injury to neglect naming any place that he honoured by his preſence.

The king, with lenity of which the world has had perhaps no other example, declined to be the judge or avenger of his own or his father's wrongs; and promiſed to admit into the Act of Oblivion all, except thoſe whom the parliament ſhould except; and the parliament doomed none to capital puniſhment but the wretches who had immediately co-operated in the murder of the king. Milton was certainly not one of them; he had only juſtified what they had done.

This

This juſtification was indeed ſufficiently offenſive; and (June 16) an order was iſſued to ſeize Milton's *Defence*, and Godwin's *Obſtructors of Juſtice*, another book of the ſame tendency, and burn them by the common hangman. The attorney-general was ordered to proſecute the authors; but Milton was not ſeized, nor perhaps very diligently purſued.

Not long after (Auguſt 19) the flutter of innumerable boſoms was ſtilled by an act, which the king, that his mercy might want no recommendation of elegance, rather called an *act of oblivion* than of *grace*. Godwin was named, with nineteen more, as incapacitated for

any publick truſt; but of Milton there was no exception.

Of this tenderneſs ſhewn to Milton, the curioſity of mankind has not forborn to enquire the reaſon. Burnet thinks he was forgotten; but this is another inſtance which may confirm Dalrymple's obſervation, who ſays, "that "whenever Burnet's narrations are exa-"mined, he appears to be miſtaken."

Forgotten he was not; for his proſecution was ordered; it muſt be therefore by deſign that he was included in the general oblivion. He is ſaid to have had friends in the Houſe, ſuch as Marvel, Morrice, and Sir Thomas Clarges; and undoubtedly a man like him muſt have had influence. A very particular

ſtory of his eſcape is told by Richardſon in his Memoirs, which he received from Pope, as delivered by Betterton, who might have heard it from Davenant. In the war between the king and parliament, Davenant was made priſoner, and condemned to die; but was ſpared at the requeſt of Milton. When the turn of ſucceſs brought Milton into the like danger, Davenant repaid the benefit by appearing in his favour. Here is a reciprocation of generoſity and gratitude ſo pleaſing, that the tale makes its own way to credit. But if help were wanted, I know not where to find it. The danger of Davenant is certain from his own relation; but of his eſcape there is no account. Betterton's narration can

be traced no higher; it is not known that he had it from Davenant. We are told that the benefit exchanged was life for life; but it ſeems not certain that Milton's life ever was in danger; Godwin, who had committed the ſame kind of crime, eſcaped with incapacitation; and as excluſion from publick truſt is a puniſhment which the power of government can commonly inflict without the help of a particular law, it required no great intereſt to exempt Milton from a cenſure little more than verbal. Something may be reaſonably aſcribed to veneration and compaſſion; to veneration of his abilities, and compaſſion for his diſtreſſes, which made it fit to forgive his malice for his learning. He was now

now poor and blind; and who would purſue with violence an illuſtrious enemy, depreſſed by fortune, and diſarmed by nature?

The publication of the act of oblivion put him in the ſame condition with his fellow-ſubjects. He was, however, upon ſome pretence not now known, in the cuſtody of the ſerjeant in December; and, when he was releaſed, upon his refuſal of the fees demanded, he and the ſerjeant were called before the Houſe. He was now ſafe within the ſhade of oblivion, and knew himſelf to be as much out of the power of a griping officer as any other man. How the queſtion was determined is not known. Milton would hardly have contended,

tended, but that he knew himſelf to have right on his ſide.

He then removed to Jewin-ſtreet, near Alderſgate-ſtreet; and being blind, and by no means wealthy, wanted a domeſtick companion and attendant; and therefore, by the recommendation of Dr. Paget, married Elizabeth Minſhul, of a gentleman's family in Cheſhire, probably without a fortune. All his wives were virgins; for he has declared that he thought it groſs and indelicate to be a ſecond huſband: upon what other principles his choice was made, cannot now be known; but marriage affotded not much of his happineſs. The firſt wife left him in diſguſt, and was brought back only by terror: the ſecond,

cond, indeed, ſeems to have been more a favourite; but her life was ſhort. The third, as Philips relates, oppreſſed his children in his life-time, and cheated them at his death.

Soon after his marriage, according to an obſcure ſtory, he was offered the continuance of his employment; and being preſſed by his wife to accept it, anſwered, "You, like other women, want "to ride in your coach; my wiſh is to "live and die an honeſt man." If he conſidered the Latin ſecretary as exerciſing any of the powers of government, he that had ſhared authority either with the parliament or Cromwel, might have forborn to talk very loudly of his honeſty; and if he thought the office pure-

purely ministerial, he certainly might have honestly retained it under the king. But this tale has too little evidence to deserve a disquisition; large offers and sturdy rejections are among the most common topicks of falsehood.

He had so much either of prudence or gratitude, that he forbore to disturb the new settlement with any of his political or ecclesiastical opinions, and from this time devoted himself to poetry and literature. Of his zeal for learning, in all its parts, he gave a proof by publishing, the next year (1661) *Accidence commenced Grammar*; a little book which has nothing remarkable, but that its author, who had been lately defending the supreme powers of his country, and

was

was then writing *Paradiſe Loſt*, could deſcend from his elevation to reſcue children from the perplexity of grammatical confuſion, and the trouble of leſſons unneceſſarily repeated.

About this time, Elwood the quaker being recommended to him, as one who would read Latin to him, for the advantage of his converſation; attended him every afternoon, except on Sundays. Milton, who, in his letter to Hartlib, had declared, that *to read Latin with an Engliſh mouth is as ill a hearing as Law French*, required that Elwood ſhould learn and practiſe the Italian pronunciation, which, he ſaid, was neceſſary, if he would talk with foreigners. This ſeems to have been a

taſk

taſk troubleſome without uſe. There is little reaſon for preferring the Italian pronunciation to our own, except that it is more general; and to teach it to an Engliſhman is only to make him a foreigner at home. He who travels, if he ſpeaks Latin, may ſo ſoon learn the ſounds which every native gives it, that he need make no proviſion before his journey; and if ſtrangers viſit us, it is their buſineſs to practiſe ſuch conformity to our modes as they expect from us in their own countries. Elwood complied with the directions, and improved himſelf by his attendance; for he relates, that Milton, having a curious ear, knew by his voice when he read what he did not underſtand, and would ſtop him,

him, and *open the moſt difficult paſſages.*

In a ſhort time he took a houſe in the *Artillery Walk*, leading to *Bunhill Fields*; the mention of which concludes the regiſter of Milton's removals and habitations. He lived longer in this place than in any other.

He was now buſied by *Paradiſe Loſt*. Whence he drew the original deſign has been variouſly conjectured, by men who cannot bear to think themſelves ignorant of that which, at laſt, neither diligence nor ſagacity can diſcover. Some find the hint in an Italian tragedy; Voltaire tells a wild and unauthoriſed ſtory of a farce ſeen by Milton in Italy, which opened thus: *Let the Rainbow be*

the

the Fiddleſtick of the Fiddle of Heaven. It has been already ſhewn, that the firſt conception was of a tragedy or myſtery, not of a narrative, but a dramatick work, which he is ſuppoſed to have begun to reduce to its preſent form about the time (1655) when he finiſhed his diſpute with the defenders of the king.

He long before had promiſed to adorn his native country by ſome great performance, while he had yet perhaps no ſettled deſign, and was ſtimulated only by ſuch expectations as naturally aroſe from the ſurvey of his attainments, and the conſciouſneſs of his powers. What he ſhould undertake, it was difficult to determine. He was *long chuſing, and began late.*

While he was obliged to divide his time between his private studies and affairs of state, his poetical labour must have been often interrupted; and perhaps he did little more in that busy time than construct the narrative, adjust the episodes, proportion the parts, accumulate images and sentiments, and treasure in his memory, or preserve in writing, such hints as books or meditation would supply. Nothing particular is known of his intellectual operations while he was a statesman; for, having every help and accommodation at hand, he had no need of uncommon expedients.

Being driven from all publick stations, he is yet too great not to be

traced

traced by curiosity to his retirement; where he has been found by Mr. Richardson, the fondest of his admirers, *sitting before his door in a grey coat of coarse cloth, in warm sultry weather, to enjoy the fresh air; and so, as well as in his own room, receiving the visits of people of distinguished parts as well as quality.* His visiters of high quality must now be imagined to be few; but men of parts might reasonably court the conversation of a man so generally illustrious, that foreigners are reported, by Wood, to have visited the house in Bread-street where he was born.

According to another account, he was seen in a small house, *neatly enough dressed in black cloaths, sitting in a room hung*

hung with ruſty green; pale but not cadaverous, with chalkſtones in his hands. He ſaid, that if it were not for the gout, his blindneſs would be tolerable.

In the intervals of his pain, being made unable to uſe the common exerciſes, he uſed to ſwing in a chair, and ſometimes played upon an organ.

He was now confeſſedly and viſibly employed upon his poem, of which the progreſs might be noted by thoſe with whom he was familiar; for he was obliged, when he had compoſed as many lines as his memory would conveniently retain, to employ ſome friend in writing them, having, at leaſt for part of the time, no regular attendant. This gave opportunity to obſervations and reports.

Mr. Philips obſerves, that there was a very remarkable circumſtance in the compoſure of *Paradiſe Loſt*, "which "I have a particular reaſon," ſays he, "to remember; for whereas I had the "peruſal of it from the very begin- "ning, for ſome years, as I went from "time to time to viſit him, in parcels "of ten, twenty, or thirty verſes at a "time (which, being written by what- "ever hand came next, might poſſibly "want correction as to the orthography "and pointing), having, as the Summer "came on, not been ſhewed any for a "conſiderable while; and deſiring the "reaſon thereof, was anſwered, that his "vein never happily flowed but from "the Autumnal Equinox to the Vernal; "and

"and that whatever he attempted at "other times was never to his ſatisfac- "tion, though he courted his fancy "never ſo much; ſo that, in all the "years he was about this poem, he may "be ſaid to have ſpent half his time "therein."

Upon this relation Toland remarks, that in his opinion Philips has miſtaken the time of the year; for Milton, in his Elegies, declares that with the advance of the Spring he feels the increaſe of his poetical force, *redeunt in carmina vires*. To this it is anſwered, that Philips could hardly miſtake time ſo well marked; and it may be added, that Milton might find different times of the year favourable to different parts of life.

Mr. Richardſon conceives it impoſſible that *ſuch a work ſhould be ſuſpended for ſix months, or for one. It may go on faſter or ſlower, but it muſt go on.* By what neceſſity it muſt continually go on, or why it might not be laid aſide and reſumed, it is not eaſy to diſcover.

This dependance of the ſoul upon the ſeaſons, thoſe temporary and periodical ebbs and flows of intellect, may, I ſuppoſe, juſtly be derided as the fumes of vain imagination. *Sapiens dominabitur aſtris.* The author that thinks himſelf weather-bound will find, with a little help from hellebore, that he is only idle or exhauſted. But while this notion has poſſeſſion of the head, it produces the inability which it ſuppoſes.

Our powers owe much of their energy to our hopes; *poſſunt quia poſſe videntur.* When ſucceſs ſeems attainable, diligence is enforced; but when it is admitted that the faculties are ſuppreſſed by a croſs wind, or a cloudy ſky, the day is given up without reſiſtance; for who can contend with the courſe of Nature?

From ſuch prepoſſeſſions Milton ſeems not to have been free. There prevailed in his time an opinion that the world was in its decay, and that we have had the misfortune to be produced in the decrepitude of Nature. It was ſuſpected that the whole creation languiſhed, that neither trees nor animals had the height or bulk of their predeceſſors, and that every thing was daily ſinking in gradual

diminution. Milton appears to ſuſpect that ſouls partake of the general degeneracy, and is not without ſome fear that his book is to be written in *an age too late* for heroick poeſy.

Another opinion wanders about the world, and ſometimes finds reception among wiſe men; an opinion that reſtrains the operations of the mind to particular regions, and ſuppoſes that a luckleſs mortal may be born in a degree of latitude too high or too low for wiſdom or for wit. From this fancy, wild as it is, he had not wholly cleared his head, when he feared leſt the *climate* of his country might be *too cold* for flights of imagination.

Into

Into a mind already occupied by ſuch fancies, another not more reaſonable might eaſily find its way. He that could fear leſt his genius had fallen upon too old a world, or too chill a climate, might conſiſtently magnify to himſelf the influences of the ſeaſons, and believe his faculties to be vigorous only half the year.

His ſubmiſſion to the ſeaſons was at leaſt more reaſonable than his dread of decaying nature, or a frigid zone; for general cauſes operate uniformly in a general abatement of mental power: if leſs could be performed by the writer, leſs likewiſe would content the judges of his work. Among this lagging race of froſty grovellers he might ſtill have riſen into

eminence by producing ſomething which *they ſhould not willingly let die.* However inferior to the heroes who were born in better ages, he might ſtill be great among his contemporaries, with the hope of growing every day greater in the dwindle of poſterity. He might ſtill be the giant of the pygmies, the one-eyed monarch of the blind.

Of his artifices of ſtudy, or particular hours of compoſition, we have little account, and there was perhaps little to be told. Richardſon, who ſeems to have been very diligent in his enquiries, but diſcovers always a wiſh to find Milton diſcriminated from other men, relates, that "he would ſometimes lie awake "whole nights, but not a verſe could "he

"he make; and on a ſudden his poeti-
"cal faculty would ruſh upon him with
"an *impetus*, or *æſtrum*, and his daugh-
"ter was immediately called to ſecure
"what came. At other times he would
"dictate perhaps forty lines in a breath,
"and then reduce them to half the
"number."

Theſe burſts of light, and involutions of darkneſs; theſe tranſient and involuntary excurſions and retroceſſions of invention, having ſome appearance of deviation from the common train of Nature, are eagerly caught by the lovers of a wonder. Yet ſomething of this inequality happens to every man in every mode of exertion, manual or mental. The mechanick cannot handle his ham-

mer

mer and his file at all times with equal dexterity; there are hours, he knows not why, when *his hand is out*. By Mr. Richardſon's relation, caſually conveyed, much regard cannot be claimed. That, in his intellectual hour, Milton called for his daughter *to ſecure what came*, may be queſtioned; for unluckily it happens to be known that his daughters were never taught to write; nor would he have been obliged, as is univerſally confeſſed, to have employed any caſual viſiter in diſburthening his memory, if his daughter could have performed the office.

The ſtory of reducing his exuberance has been told of other authors, and though doubtleſs true of every fer-

fertile and copious mind, ſeems to have been gratuitouſly tranferred to Milton.

What he has told us, and we cannot now know more, is, that he compoſed much of his poem in the night and morning, I ſuppoſe before his mind was diſturbed with common buſineſs; and that he poured out with great fluency his *unpremeditated verſe*. Verſification, free, like his, from the diſtreſſes of rhyme, muſt, by a work ſo long, be made prompt and habitual; and, when his thoughts were once adjuſted, the words would come at his command.

At what particular times of his life the parts of his work were written, cannot often be known. The beginning of the third book ſhews that he had loſt

his

his ſight; and the Introduction to the ſeventh, that the return of the king had clouded him with diſcountenance; and that he was offended by the licentious feſtivity of the Reſtoration. There are no other internal notes of time. Milton, being now cleared from all effects of his diſloyalty, had nothing required from him but the common duty of living in quiet, to be rewarded with the common right of protection: but this, which, when he ſculked from the approach of his king, was perhaps more than he hoped, ſeems not to have ſatisfied him; for no ſooner is he ſafe than he finds himſelf in danger, *fallen on evil days and evil tongues, and with darkneſs and with danger compaſs'd round.*

This

This darkneſs, had his eyes been better employed, had undoubtedly deſerved compaſſion; but to add the mention of danger was ungrateful and unjuſt. He was fallen indeed on *evil days*; the time was come in which regicides could no longer boaſt their wickedneſs. But of *evil tongues* for Milton to complain, required impudence at leaſt equal to his other powers; Milton, whoſe warmeſt advocates muſt allow, that he never ſpared any aſperity of reproach or brutality of inſolence.

But the charge itſelf ſeems to be falſe; for it would be hard to recollect any reproach caſt upon him, either ſerious or ludicrous, through the whole remaining part of his life. He perſued his ſtudies,

or

or his amuſements, without perſecution, moleſtation, or inſult. Such is the reverence paid to great abilities, however miſuſed: they who contemplated in Milton the ſcholar and the wit, were contented to forget the reviler of his king.

When the plague (1665) raged in London, Milton took refuge at Chalfont in Eſſex; where Elwood, who had taken the houſe for him, firſt ſaw a complete copy of *Paradiſe Loſt*, and, having peruſed it, ſaid to him, "Thou haſt "ſaid a great deal upon *Paradiſe Loſt*; "what haſt thou to ſay upon *Paradiſe "Found?*"

Next year, when the danger of infection had ceaſed, he returned to Bunhill-

Bunhill-fields, and deſigned the publication of his poem. A licenſe was neceſſary, and he could expect no great kindneſs from a chaplain of the archbiſhop of Canterbury. He ſeems, however, to have been treated with tenderneſs; for though objections were made to particular paſſages, and among them to the ſimile of the ſun eclipſed in the firſt book, yet the licenſe was granted; and he ſold his copy, April 27, 1667, to Samuel Simmons for an immediate payment of five pounds, with a ſtipulation to receive five pounds more when thirteen hundred ſhould be ſold of the firſt edition; and again, five pounds after the ſale of the ſame number of the ſecond edition, and another five pounds

after the ſame ſale of the third. None of the three editions were to be extended beyond fifteen hundred copies.

The firſt edition was of ten books, in a ſmall quarto. The titles were varied from year to year; and an advertiſement and the arguments of the books were omitted in ſome copies, and inſerted in others.

The ſale gave him in two years a right to his ſecond payment, for which the receipt was ſigned April 26, 1669. The ſecond edition was not given till 1674; it was printed in ſmall octavo; and the number of books was encreaſed to twelve, by a diviſion of the ſeventh and twelfth; and ſome other ſmall improvements were made. The

third edition was published in 1678; and the widow, to whom the copy was then to devolve, sold all her claims to Simmons for eight pounds, according to her receipt given Dec. 21, 1680. Simmons had already agreed to transfer the whole right to Brabazon Aylmer for twenty-five pounds; and Aylmer sold to Jacob Tonson half, August 17, 1683, and half, March 24, 1690, at a price considerably enlarged.

The slow sale and tardy reputation of this poem, have been always mentioned as evidences of neglected merit, and of the uncertainty of literary fame; and enquiries have been made, and conjectures offered, about the causes of its long obscurity and late reception. But

has the caſe been truly ſtated? Have not lamentation and wonder been laviſhed on an evil that was never felt?

That in the reigns of Charles and James the *Paradiſe Loſt* received no publick acclamations is readily confeſſed. Wit and literature were on the ſide of the Court: and who that ſolicited favour or the faſhion would venture to praiſe the defender of the regicides? All that he himſelf could think his due, from *evil tongues* in *evil days*, was that reverential ſilence which was generouſly preſerved. But it cannot be inferred that his poem was not read, or not, however unwillingly, admired.

The ſale, if it be conſidered, will juſtify the publick. Thoſe who have no

power to judge of paſt times but by their own, ſhould always doubt their concluſions. The ſale of books was not in Milton's age what it is in the preſent. To read was not then a general amuſement; neither traders, nor often gentlemen, thought themſelves diſgraced by ignorance. The women had not then aſpired to literature, nor was every houſe ſupplied with a cloſet of books. Thoſe indeed, who profeſſed learning, were not leſs learned than at any other time; but of that middle race of ſtudents who read for pleaſure or accompliſhment, and who buy the numerous products of modern typography, the number was then comparatively ſmall. To prove the paucity of readers, it may be ſuffi-

cient to remark, that the nation had been ſatisfied, from 1623 to 1664, that is, forty-one years, with only two editions of the works of Shakeſpeare, which probably did not together make one thouſand copies.

The ſale of thirteen hundred copies in two years, in oppoſition to ſo much recent enmity, and to a ſtyle of verſification new to all and diſguſting to many, was an uncommon example of the prevalence of genius. The demand did not immediately encreaſe; for many more readers than were ſupplied at firſt the nation did not afford. Only three thouſand were ſold in eleven years; for it forced its way without aſſiſtance: its admirers did not dare to publiſh their opi-

opinion; and the opportunities now given of attracting notice by advertisements were then very few; for the means of proclaiming the publication of new books have been produced by that general literature which now pervades the nation through all its ranks.

But the reputation and price of the copy ſtill advanced, till the Revolution put an end to the ſecrecy of love, and *Paradiſe Loſt* broke into open view with ſufficient ſecurity of kind reception.

Fancy can hardly forbear to conjecture with what temper Milton ſurveyed the ſilent progreſs of his work, and marked his reputation ſtealing its way in a kind of ſubterraneous current through fear and ſilence. I can-

not but conceive him calm and confident, little diſappointed, not at all dejected, relying on his own merit with ſteady conſciouſneſs, and waiting, without impatience, the viciſſitudes of opinion, and the impartiality of a future generation.

In the mean time he continued his ſtudies, and ſupplied the want of ſight by a very odd expedient, of which Philips gives the following account:

Mr. Philips tells us, "that though "our author had daily about him one "or other to read, ſome perſons of man's "eſtate, who, of their own accord, "greedily catched at the opportunity "of being his readers, that they might "as well reap the benefit of what they

"read

"read to him, as oblige him by the be-
"nefit of their reading; and others of
"younger years were ſent by their pa-
"rents to the ſame end: yet excuſing
"only the eldeſt daughter, by reaſon
"of her bodily infirmity, and difficult
"utterance of ſpeech, (which, to ſay
"truth, I doubt was the principal cauſe
"of excuſing her) the other two were
"condemned to the performance of
"reading, and exactly pronouncing of
"all the languages of whatever book
"he ſhould, at one time or other, think
"fit to peruſe, viz. the Hebrew (and I
"think the Syriac), the Greek, the
"Latin, the Italian, Spaniſh, and French.
"All which ſorts of books to be con-
"fined to read, without underſtanding

"one

"one word, muſt needs be a trial of "patience almoſt beyond endurance. "Yet it was endured by both for a long "time, though the irkſomeneſs of this "employment could not be always con- "cealed, but broke out more and more "into expreſſions of uneaſineſs; ſo that "at length they were all, even the el- "deſt alſo, ſent out to learn ſome cu- "rious and ingenious ſorts of manu- "facture, that are proper for women to "learn; particularly embroideries in "gold or ſilver."

In the ſcene of miſery which this mode of intellectual labour ſets before our eyes, it is hard to determine whether the daughters or the father are moſt to be lamented. A language not

under-

underſtood can never be ſo read as to give pleaſure, and very ſeldom ſo as to convey meaning. If few men would have had reſolution to write books with ſuch embarraſſments, few likewiſe would have wanted ability to find ſome better expedient.

Three years after his *Paradiſe Loſt* (1670), he publiſhed his *Hiſtory of England*, comprifing the whole fable of Geoffry of Monmouth, and continued to the Norman invaſion. Why he ſhould have given the firſt part, which he ſeems not to believe, and which is univerſally rejected, it is difficult to conjecture. The ſtile is harſh; but it has ſomething of rough vigour, which perhaps may often ſtrike, though it cannot pleaſe.

On

On this hiſtory the licenſer again fixed his claws, and before he would tranſmit it to the preſs tore out ſeveral parts. Some cenſures of the Saxon monks were taken away, leſt they ſhould be applied to the modern clergy; and a character of the Long Parliament, and Aſſembly of Divines, was excluded; of which the author gave a copy to the earl of Angleſea, and which, being afterwards publiſhed, has been ſince inſerted in its proper place.

The ſame year were printed *Paradiſe Regained*, and *Sampſon Agoniſtes*, a tragedy written in imitation of the ancients, and never deſigned by the author for the ſtage. Theſe poems were publiſhed by another bookſeller. It has been

been asked, whether Simmons was discouraged from receiving them by the slow sale of the former? Why a writer changed his bookseller a hundred years ago, I am far from hoping to discover. It is certain, that he who in two years sells thirteen hundred copies of a volume in quarto, bought for two payments of five pounds each, has no reason to repent his purchase.

When Milton shewed *Paradise Regained* to Elwood, "This," said he, "is "owing to you; for you put it in my "head by the question you put to me "at Chalfont, which otherwise I had "not thought of."

His last poetical offspring was his favourite. He could not, as Elwood relates,

lates, endure to hear *Paradiſe Loſt* preferred to *Paradiſe Regained*. Many cauſes may vitiate a writer's judgement of his own works. On that which has coſt him much labour he ſets a high value, becauſe he is unwilling to think that he has been diligent in vain; what has been produced without toilſome efforts is conſidered with delight, as a proof of vigorous faculties and fertile invention; and the laſt work, whatever it be, has neceſſarily moſt of the grace of novelty. Milton, however it happened, had this prejudice, and had it to himſelf.

To that multiplicity of attainments, and extent of comprehenſion, that entitle this great author to our veneration, may be added a kind of humble dig-

nity, which did not diſdain the meaneſt ſervices to literature. The epick poet, the controvertiſt, the politician, having already deſcended to accommodate children with a book of rudiments, now, in the laſt years of his life, compoſed a book of Logick, for the initiation of ſtudents in philoſophy; and publiſhed (1672) *Artis Logicæ plenior Inſtitutio ad Petri Rami methodum concinnata*; that is, "A new Scheme of Logick, according "to the Method of Ramus." I know not whether, even in this book, he did not intend an act of hoſtility againſt the Univerſities; for Ramus was one of the firſt oppugners of the old philoſophy, who diſturbed with innovations the quiet of the ſchools.

His

His polemical disposition again revived. He had now been safe so long, that he forgot his fears, and published a *Treatise of true Religion, Heresy, Schism, Toleration, and the best Means to prevent the Growth of Popery*.

But this little tract is modestly written, with respectful mention of the church of England, and an appeal to the thirty-nine articles. His principle of toleration is, agreement in the sufficiency of the Scriptures; and he extends it to all who, whatever their opinions are, profess to derive them from the sacred books. The papists appeal to other testimonies, and are therefore in his opinion not to be permitted the liberty of either publick or private worship; for though

though they plead conſcience, *we have no warrant*, he ſays, *to regard conſcience which is not grounded in Scripture.*

Thoſe who are not convinced by his reaſons, may be perhaps delighted with his wit. The term *Roman catholick* is, he ſays, *one of the Pope's bulls; it is particular univerſal*, or *catholick ſchiſmatick.*

He has, however, ſomething better. As the beſt preſervative againſt Popery, he recommends the diligent peruſal of the Scriptures; a duty, from which he warns the buſy part of mankind not to think themſelves excuſed.

He now reprinted his juvenile poems, with ſome additions.

In the last year of his life he sent to the press, seeming to take delight in publication, a collection of Familiar Epistles in Latin; to which, being too few to make a volume, he added some academical exercises, which perhaps he perused with pleasure, as they recalled to his memory the days of youth; but for which nothing but veneration for his name could now procure a reader.

When he had attained his sixty-sixth year, the gout, with which he had been long tormented, prevailed over the enfeebled powers of nature. He died by a quiet and silent expiration, about the tenth of November 1674, at his house in Bunhill-fields; and was buried next his father in the chancel of St. Giles

at

at Cripplegate. His funeral was very ſplendidly and numerouſly attended.

Upon his grave there is ſuppoſed to have been no memorial; but in our time a monument has been erected in Weſtminſter Abbey *To the Author of Paradiſe Loſt*, by Mr. Benſon, who has in the inſcription beſtowed more words upon himſelf than upon Milton.

When the inſcription for the monument of Philips, in which he was ſaid to be *ſoli Miltono ſecundus*, was exhibited to Dr. Sprat, then dean of Weſtminſter, he refuſed to admit it; the name of Milton was, in his opinion, too deteſtable to be read on the wall of a building dedicated to devotion. Atterbury, who ſucceeded him, being au-

thor of the inſcription, permitted its reception. "And ſuch has been the "change of publick opinion," ſaid Dr. Gregory, from whom I heard this account, "that I have ſeen erected in the "church a ſtatue of that man, whoſe "name I once knew conſidered as a pol-"lution of its walls."

Milton has the reputation of having been in his youth eminently beautiful, ſo as to have been called the Lady of his college. His hair, which was of a light brown, parted at the foretop, and hung down upon his ſhoulders, according to the picture which he has given of Adam. He was, however, not of the heroick ſtature, but rather below the middle ſize, according to Mr. Richard-

ſon,

ſon, who mentions him as having narrowly eſcaped from being *ſhort and thick*. He was vigorous and active, and delighted in the exerciſe of the ſword, in which he is related to have been eminently ſkilful. His weapon was, I believe, not the rapier, but the back-ſword, of which he recommends the uſe in his book on Education.

His eyes are ſaid never to have been bright; but, if he was a dexterous fencer, they muſt have been once quick.

His domeſtick habits, ſo far as they are known, were thoſe of a ſevere ſtudent. He drank little ſtrong drink of any kind, and fed without delicacy of choice or exceſs in quantity. In his youth he ſtudied late at night; but af-

terwards changed his hours, and reſted in bed from nine to four in the Summer, and five in Winter. The courſe of his day was beſt known after he was blind. When he firſt roſe he heard a chapter in the Hebrew Bible, and then ſtudied till twelve; then took ſome exerciſe for an hour; then dined; then plaid on the organ, and ſung, or heard another ſing; then ſtudied to ſix; then entertained his viſiters, till eight; then ſupped, and, after a pipe of tobacco and a glaſs of water, went to bed.

So is his life deſcribed; but this even tenour appears attainable only in Colleges. He that lives in the world will ſometimes have the ſucceſſion of his practice broken and confuſed. Viſiters,

of

of whom Milton is repreſented to have had great numbers, will come and ſtay unſeaſonably; buſineſs, of which every man has ſome, muſt be done when others will do it.

When he did not care to riſe early, he had ſomething read to him by his bedſide; perhaps at this time his daughters were employed. He compoſed much in the morning, and dictated in the day, ſitting obliquely in an elbow-chair, with his leg thrown over the arm.

Fortune appears not to have had much of his care. In the civil wars he lent his perſonal eſtate to the parliament; but when, after the conteſt was decided, he ſolicited repayment, he met

not only with neglect, but *ſharp rebuke*; and, having tired both himſelf and his friends, was given up to poverty and hopeleſs indignation, till he ſhewed how able he was to do greater ſervice. He was then made Latin ſecretary, with two hundred pounds a year; and had a thouſand pounds for his *Defence of the People*. His widow, who, after his death, retired to Namptwich in Cheſhire, and died about 1729, is ſaid to have reported that he loſt two thouſand pounds by entruſting it to a ſcrivener; and that, in the general depredation upon the Church, he had graſped an eſtate of about ſixty pounds a year belonging to Weſtminſter Abbey, which, like other ſhares of the plunder of rebellion, he

was

was afterwards obliged to return. Two thouſand pounds, which he had placed in the Exciſe-office, were alſo loſt. There is yet no reaſon to believe that he was ever reduced to indigence. His wants being few, were competently ſupplied. He ſold his library before his death, and left his family fifteen hundred pounds, on which his widow laid hold, and only gave one hundred to each of his daughters.

His literature was unqueſtionably great. He read all the languages which are conſidered either as learned or polite; Hebrew, with its two dialects, Greek, Latin, Italian, French, and Spaniſh. In Latin his ſkill was ſuch as places him in the firſt rank of writers and critics;

and

and he appears to have cultivated Italian with uncommon diligence. The books in which his daughter, who uſed to read to him, repreſented him as moſt delighting, after Homer, which he could almoſt repeat, were Ovid's Metamorphoſes and Euripides. His Euripides is, by Mr. Cradock's kindneſs, now in my hands: the margin is ſometimes noted; but I have found nothing remarkable.

Of the Engliſh poets he ſet moſt value upon Spenſer, Shakeſpeare, and Cowley. Spenſer was apparently his favourite: Shakeſpeare he may eaſily be ſuppoſed to like, with every other ſkilful reader; but I ſhould not have expected that Cowley, whoſe ideas of excellence

cellence were ſo different from his own, would have had much of his approbation. His character of Dryden, who ſometimes viſited him, was, that he was a good rhymiſt, but no poet.

His theological opinions are ſaid to have been firſt calviniſtical; and afterwards, perhaps when he began to hate the Preſbyterians, to have tended towards Arminianiſm. In the mixed queſtions of theology and government, he never thinks that he can recede far enough from popery, or prelacy; but what Baudius ſays of Eraſmus ſeems applicable to him, *magis habuit quod fugeret, quam quod ſequeretur*. He had determined rather what to condemn than what to approve. He has not aſſociated himſelf with

with any denomination of Proteſtants: we know rather what he was not, than what he was. He was not of the church of Rome; he was not of the church of England.

To be of no church is dangerous. Religion, of which the rewards are diſtant, and which is animated only by Faith and Hope, will glide by degrees out of the mind, unleſs it be invigorated and reimpreſſed by external ordinances, by ſtated calls to worſhip, and the ſalutary influence of example. Milton, who appears to have had full conviction of the truth of Chriſtianity, and to have regarded the Holy Scriptures with the profoundeſt veneration, to have been untainted by any heretical peculiarity

liarity of opinion, and to have lived in a confirmed belief of the immediate and occaſional agency of Providence, yet grew old without any viſible worſhip. In the diſtribution of his hours, there was no hour of prayer, either ſolitary, or with his houſehold; omitting publick prayers, he omitted all.

Of this omiſſion the reaſon has been ſought, upon a ſuppoſition which ought never to be made, that men live with their own approbation, and juſtify their conduct to themſelves. Prayer certainly was not thought ſuperfluous by him, who repreſents our firſt parents as praying acceptably in the ſtate of innocence, and efficaciouſly after their fall. That he lived without prayer can hardly be af-

firmed;

firmed; his ſtudies and meditations were an habitual prayer. The neglect of it in his family was probably a fault for which he condemned himſelf, and which he intended to correct, but that death, as too often happens, intercepted his reformation.

His political notions were thoſe of an acrimonious and ſurly republican, for which it is not known that he gave any better reaſon than that *a popular government was the moſt frugal; for the trappings of a monarchy would ſet up an ordinary commonwealth.* It is ſurely very ſhallow policy, that ſuppoſes money to be the chief good; and even this, without conſidering that the ſupport and expence of a Court is, for the moſt

part,

part, only a particular kind of traffick, by which money is circulated, without any national impoveriſhment.

Milton's republicaniſm was, I am afraid, founded in an envious hatred of greatneſs, and a ſullen deſire of independence; in petulance, impatient of controul, and pride diſdainful of ſuperiority. He hated monarchs in the ſtate, and prelates in the church; for he hated all whom he was required to obey. It is to be ſuſpected that his predominant deſire was to deſtroy rather than eſtabliſh, and that he felt not ſo much the love of liberty as repugnance to authority.

It has been obſerved, that they who moſt loudly clamour for liberty do not

moſt liberally grant it. What we know of Milton's character, in domeſtick relations, is, that he was ſevere and arbitrary. His family conſiſted of women; and there appears in his books ſomething like a Turkiſh contempt of females, as ſubordinate and inferiour beings. That his own daughters might not break the ranks, he ſuffered them to be depreſſed by a mean and penurious education. He thought woman made only for obedience, and man only for rebellion.

Of his family ſome account may be expected. His ſiſter, firſt married to Mr. Philips, afterwards married Mr. Agar, a friend of her firſt huſband, who ſucceeded him in the Crown-office. She had

had by her first husband Edward and John, the two nephews whom Milton educated; and by her second, two daughters.

His brother, Sir Christopher, had two daughters, Mary and Catherine, and a son Thomas, who succeeded Agar in the Crown-office, and left a daughter, living in 1749 in Grosvenor-street.

Milton had children only by his first wife; Anne, Mary, and Deborah. Anne, though deformed, married a master-builder, and died of her first child. Mary died single. Deborah married Abraham Clark, a weaver in Spital-fields, and lived 76 years, to August 1727. This is the daughter of whom publick mention has been made. She

could repeat the firſt lines of Homer, the Metamorphoſes, and ſome of Euripides, by having often read them. Yet here incredulity is ready to make a ſtand. Many repetitions are neceſſary to fix in the memory lines not underſtood; and why ſhould Milton wiſh or want to hear them ſo often! Theſe lines were at the beginning of the poems. Of a book written in a language not underſtood, the beginning raiſes no more attention than the end; and as thoſe that underſtand it know commonly the beginning beſt, its rehearſal will ſeldom be neceſſary. It is not likely that Milton required any paſſage to be ſo much repeated as that his daughter could learn it; nor likely that he deſired the initial lines to be read

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at all; nor that the daughter, weary of the drudgery of pronouncing unideal ſounds, would voluntarily commit them to memory.

To this gentlewoman Addiſon made a preſent, and promiſed ſome eſtabliſhment; but died ſoon after. Queen Caroline ſent her fifty guineas. She had ſeven ſons and three daughters; but none of them had any children, except her ſon Caleb and her daughter Elizabeth. Caleb went to Fort St. George in the Eaſt Indies, and had two ſons, of whom nothing is now known. Elizabeth married Thomas Foſter, a weaver in Spital-fields, and had ſeven children, who all died. She kept a petty grocer's or chandler's ſhop, firſt at Halloway,

and afterwards in Cock-lane near Shoreditch Church. She knew little of her grandfather, and that little was not good. She told of his harſhneſs to his daughters, and his refuſal to have them taught to write; and, in oppoſition to other accounts, repreſented him as delicate, though temperate, in his diet.

In 1750, April 5, *Comus* was played for her benefit. She had ſo little acquaintance with diverſion or gaiety, that ſhe did not know what was intended when a benefit was offered her. The profits of the night were only one hundred and thirty pounds, though Dr. Newton brought a large contribution; and twenty pounds were given by Tonſon, a man who is to be praiſed as often

as

as he is named. Of this ſum one hundred pounds was placed in the ſtocks, after ſome debate between her and her huſband in whoſe name it ſhould be entered, and the reſt augmented their little ſtock, with which they removed to Iſlington. This was the greateſt benefaction that *Paradiſe Loſt* ever procured the author's deſcendents; and to this he, who has now attempted to relate his Life, had the honour of contributing a Prologue.

IN the examination of Milton's poetical works, I ſhall pay ſo much regard to time as to begin with his juvenile productions. For his early pieces he ſeems to have had a degree of fondneſs not very laudable: what he has once written he reſolves to preſerve, and gives to the publick an unfiniſhed poem, which he broke off becauſe he was *nothing ſatisfied with what he had done*, ſuppoſing his readers leſs nice than himſelf. Theſe preludes to his future labours are in Italian, Latin, and Engliſh. Of the Italian I cannot pretend to ſpeak as a critic; but I have heard them

them commended by a man well qualified to decide their merit. The Latin pieces are luſciouſly elegant; but the delight which they afford is rather by the exquiſite imitation of the ancient writers, by the purity of the diction, and the harmony of the numbers, than by any power of invention, or vigour of ſentiment. They are not all of equal value; the elegies excell the odes; and ſome of the exerciſes on Gunpowder Treaſon might have been ſpared.

The Engliſh poems, though they make no promiſes of *Paradiſe Loſt*, have this evidence of genius, that they have a caſt original and unborrowed. But their peculiarity is not excellence: if they differ from the verſes of others,

they differ for the worſe; for they are too often diſtinguiſhed by repulſive harſhneſs; the combinations of words are new, but they are not pleaſing; the rhymes and epithets ſeem to be laboriouſly ſought, and violently applied.

That in the early part of his life he wrote with much care appears from his manuſcripts, happily preſerved at Cambridge, in which many of his ſmaller works are found as they were firſt written, with the ſubſequent corrections. Such reliques ſhew how excellence is acquired; what we hope ever to do with eaſe, we may learn firſt to do with diligence.

Thoſe who admire the beauties of this great poet, ſometimes force their own

own judgement into falſe approbation of his little pieces, and prevail upon themſelves to think that admirable which is only ſingular. All that ſhort compoſitions can commonly attain is neatneſs and elegance. Milton never learned the art of doing little things with grace; he overlooked the milder excellence of ſuavity and ſoftneſs; he was a *Lion* that had no ſkill *in dandling the Kid*.

One of the poems on which much praiſe has been beſtowed is *Lycidas*; of which the diction is harſh, the rhymes uncertain, and the numbers unpleaſing. What beauty there is, we muſt therefore ſeek in the ſentiments and images.

It is not to be conſidered as the effuſion

of

of real paſſion; for paſſion runs not after remote alluſions and obſcure opinions. Paſſion plucks no berries from the myrtle and ivy, nor calls upon Arethuſe and Mincius, nor tells of rough *ſatyrs* and *fauns with cloven heel.* Where there is leiſure for fiction there is little grief.

In this poem there is no nature, for there is no truth; there is no art, for there is nothing new. Its form is that of a paſtoral, eaſy, vulgar, and therefore diſguſting: whatever images it can ſupply, are long ago exhauſted; and its inherent improbability always forces diſſatisfaction on the mind. When Cowley tells of Hervey that they ſtudied together, it is eaſy to ſuppoſe how much

he

he muſt miſs the companion of his labours, and the partner of his diſcoveries; but what image of tenderneſs can be excited by theſe lines?

We drove a field, and both together heard
What time the grey fly winds her ſultry horn,
Batt'ning our flocks with the freſh dews of night.

We know that they never drove a field, and that they had no flocks to batten; and though it be allowed that the repreſentation may be allegorical, the true meaning is ſo uncertain and remote, that it is never ſought, becauſe it cannot be known when it is found.

Among

Among the flocks, and copſes, and flowers, appear the heathen deities; Jove and Phœbus, Neptune and Æolus, with a long train of mythological imagery, ſuch as a College eaſily ſupplies. Nothing can leſs diſplay knowledge, or leſs exerciſe invention, than to tell how a ſhepherd has loſt his companion, and muſt now feed his flocks alone, without any judge of his ſkill in piping; and how one god aſks another god what is become of Lycidas, and how neither god can tell. He who thus grieves will excite no ſympathy; he who thus praiſes will confer no honour.

This poem has yet a groſſer fault. With theſe trifling fictions are mingled the moſt awful and ſacred truths, ſuch

as

as ought never to be polluted with ſuch irreverend combinations. The ſhepherd likewiſe is now a feeder of ſheep, and afterwards an eccleſiaſtical paſtor, a ſuperintendent of a Chriſtian flock. Such equivocations are always unſkilful, but here they are indecent, and at leaſt approach to impiety, of which, however, I believe the writer not to have been conſcious.

Such is the power of reputation juſtly acquired, that its blaze drives away the eye from nice examination. Surely no man could have fancied that he read Lycidas with pleaſure, had he not known its author.

Of the two pieces, *L'Allegro* and *Il Penſeroſo*, I believe opinion is uniform;

form; every man that reads them, reads them with pleaſure. The author's deſign is not, what Theobald has remarked, merely to ſhew how objects derive their colours from the mind, by repreſenting the operation of the ſame things upon the gay and the melancholy temper, or upon the ſame man as he is differently diſpoſed; but rather how, among the ſucceſſive variety of appearances, every diſpoſition of mind takes hold on thoſe by which it may be gratified.

The *chearful* man hears the lark in the morning; the *penſive* man hears the nightingale in the evening. The *chearful* man ſees the cock ſtrut, and hears the horn and hounds echo in the wood; then walks *not unſeen* to obſerve the

glory

glory of the rising sun, or listen to the singing milk-maid, and view the labours of the plowman and the mower; then casts his eyes about him over scenes of smiling plenty, and looks up to the distant tower, the residence of some fair inhabitant; thus he pursues rural gaiety through a day of labour or of play, and delights himself at night with the fanciful narratives of superstitious ignorance.

The *pensive* man, at one time, walks *unseen* to muse at midnight; and at another hears the sullen curfew. If the weather drives him home, he sits in a room lighted only by *glowing embers*; or by a lonely lamp outwatches the North Star, to discover the habitation of separate souls,

and

and varies the shades of meditation, by contemplating the magnificent or pathetick scenes of tragick and epic poetry. When the morning comes, a morning gloomy with rain and wind, he walks into the dark trackless woods, falls asleep by some murmuring water, and with melancholy enthusiasm expects some dream of prognostication, or some musick plaid by aerial performers.

Both Mirth and Melancholy are solitary, silent inhabitants of the breast that neither receive nor transmit communication; no mention is therefore made of a philosophical friend, or a pleasant companion. Seriousness does not arise from any participation of calamity,

lamity, nor gaiety from the pleaſures of the bottle.

The man of *chearfulneſs*, having exhauſted the country, tries what *towered cities* will afford, and mingles with ſcenes of ſplendor, gay aſſemblies, and nuptial feſtivities; but he mingles a mere ſpectator, as when the learned comedies of Jonſon, or the wild dramas of Shakeſpeare, are exhibited, he attends the theatre.

The *penſive* man never loſes himſelf in crowds, but walks the cloiſter, or frequents the cathedral. Milton probably had not yet forſaken the Church.

Both his characters delight in muſick; but he ſeems to think that chearful notes would have obtained from Pluto a

compleat diſmiſſion of Eurydice, of whom ſolemn ſounds only procured a conditional releaſe.

For the old age of Chearfulneſs he makes no proviſion; but Melancholy he conducts with great dignity to the cloſe of life.

Through theſe two poems the images are properly ſelected, and nicely diſtinguiſhed; but the colours of the diction ſeem not ſufficiently diſcriminated. His Chearfulneſs is without levity, and his Penſiveneſs without aſperity. I know not whether the characters are kept ſufficiently apart. No mirth can, indeed, be found in his melancholy; but I am afraid that I always meet ſome melancholy

lancholy in his mirth. They are two noble efforts of imagination.

The greateſt of his juvenile performances is the *Maſk of Comus*; in which may very plainly be diſcovered the dawn or twilight of *Paradiſe Loſt*. Milton appears to have formed very early that ſyſtem of diction, and mode of verſe, which his maturer judgement approved, and from which he never endeavoured nor deſired to deviate.

Nor does *Comus* afford only a ſpecimen of his language; it exhibits likewiſe his power of deſcription, and his vigour of ſentiment, employed in the praiſe and defence of virtue. A work more truely poetical is rarely found; allufions, images, and deſcriptive epi-

thets, embelliſh almoſt every period with laviſh decoration. As a ſeries of lines, therefore, it may be conſidered as worthy of all the admiration with which the votaries have received it.

As a drama it is deficient. The action is not probable. A Maſque, in thoſe parts where ſupernatural intervention is admitted, muſt indeed be given up to all the freaks of imagination; but, ſo far as the action is merely human, it ought to be reaſonable, which can hardly be ſaid of the conduct of the two brothers; who, when their ſiſter ſinks with fatigue in a pathleſs wilderneſs, wander both away together in ſearch of berries too far to find their way back, and leave a helpleſs lady to all the ſadneſs

and danger of ſolitude. This however is a defect over-balanced by its convenience.

What deſerves more reprehenſion is, that the prologue ſpoken in the wild wood by the attendant Spirit is addreſſed to the audience; a mode of communication ſo contrary to the nature of dramatick repreſentation, that no precedents can ſupport it.

The diſcourſe of the Spirit is too long; an objection that may be made to almoſt all the following ſpeeches: they have not the ſpritelineſs of a dialogue animated by reciprocal contention, but ſeem rather declamations deliberately compoſed, and formally repeated, on a moral queſtion. The au-

ditor therefore liſtens as to a lecture, without paſſion, without anxiety.

The ſong of Comus has airineſs and jollity; but, what may recommend Milton's morals as well as his poetry, the invitations to pleaſure are ſo general, that they excite no diſtinct images of corrupt enjoyment, and take no dangerous hold on the fancy.

The following ſoliloquies of Comus and the Lady are elegant, but tedious. The ſong muſt owe much to the voice, if it ever can delight. At laſt the brothers enter, with too much tranquillity; and when they have feared leſt their ſiſter ſhould be in danger, and hoped that ſhe is not in danger, the Elder makes a ſpeech in praiſe of chaſtity,

and the Younger finds how fine it is to be a philoſopher.

Then deſcends the Spirit in form of a ſhepherd; and the brother, inſtead of being in haſte to aſk his help, praiſes his ſinging, and enquires his buſineſs in that place. It is remarkable, that at this interview the brother is taken with a ſhort fit of rhyming. The Spirit relates that the Lady is in the power of Comus; the brother moraliſes again; and the Spirit makes a long narration, of no uſe becauſe it is falſe, and therefore unſuitable to a good Being.

In all theſe parts the language is poetical, and the ſentiments are generous; but there is ſomething wanting to allure attention.

The diſpute between the Lady and Comus is the moſt animated and affecting ſcene of the drama, and wants nothing but a briſker reciprocation of objections and replies to invite attention, and detain it.

The ſongs are vigorous, and full of imagery; but they are harſh in their diction, and not very muſical in their numbers.

Throughout the whole, the figures are too bold, and the language too luxuriant for dialogue. It is a drama in the epic ſtile, inelegantly ſplendid, and tediouſly inſtructive.

The *Sonnets* were written in different parts of Milton's life, upon different occaſions. They deſerve not any particular

lar criticiſm; for of the beſt it can only be ſaid, that they are not bad; and perhaps only the eighth and the twenty-firſt are truly entitled to this ſlender commendation. The fabrick of a ſonnet, however adapted to the Italian language, has never ſucceeded in ours, which, having greater variety of termination, requires the rhymes to be often changed.

Theſe little pieces may be diſpatched without much anxiety; a greater work calls for greater care. I am now to examine *Paradiſe Loſt*; a poem, which, conſidered with reſpect to deſign, may claim the firſt place, and with reſpect to performance the ſecond among

among the productions of the human mind.

By the general conſent of criticks, the firſt praiſe of genius is due to the writer of an epick poem, as it requires an aſſemblage of all the powers which are ſingly ſufficient for other compoſitions. Poetry is the art of uniting pleaſure with truth, by calling imagination to the help of reaſon. Epick poetry undertakes to teach the moſt important truths by the moſt pleaſing precepts, and therefore relates ſome great event in the moſt affecting manner. Hiſtory muſt ſupply the writer with the rudiments of narration, which he muſt improve and exalt by a nobler art, animate by dramatick energy, and diverſify

ſify by retroſpection and anticipation; morality muſt teach him the exact bounds, and different ſhades, of vice and virtue: from policy, and the practice of life, he has to learn the diſcriminations of character, and the tendency of the paſſions, either ſingle or combined; and phyſiology muſt ſupply him with illuſtrations and images. To put theſe materials to poetical uſe, is required an imagination capable of painting nature, and realizing fiction. Nor is he yet a poet till he has attained the whole extenſion of his language, diſtinguiſhed all the delicacies of phraſe, and all the colours of words, and learned to adjuſt their different ſounds to all the varieties of metrical modulation.

Boſſu

Boſſu is of opinion that the poet's firſt work is to find a *moral*, which his fable is afterwards to illuſtrate and eſtabliſh. This ſeems to have been the proceſs only of Milton; the moral of other poems is incidental and conſequent; in Milton's only it is eſſential and intrinſick. His purpoſe was the moſt uſeful and the moſt arduous; *to vindicate the ways of God to man*; to ſhew the reaſonableneſs of religion, and the neceſſity of obedience to the Divine Law.

To convey this moral there muſt be a *fable*, a narration artfully conſtructed, ſo as to excite curioſity, and ſurpriſe expectation. In this part of his work, Milton muſt be confeſſed to have equalled every other poet. He has involved

volved in his account of the Fall of Man the events which preceded, and thoſe that were to follow it: he has interwoven the whole ſyſtem of theology with ſuch propriety, that every part appears to be neceſſary; and ſcarcely any recital is wiſhed ſhorter for the ſake of quickening the progreſs of the main action.

The ſubject of an epick poem is naturally an event of great importance. That of Milton is not the deſtruction of a city, the conduct of a colony, or the foundation of an empire. His ſubject is the fate of worlds, the revolutions of heaven and of earth; rebellion againſt the Supreme King, raiſed by the higheſt order of created beings; the overthrow of their hoſt, and the puniſh-

ment

ment of their crime; the creation of a new race of reaſonable creatures; their original happineſs and innocence, their forfeiture of immortality, and their reſtoration to hope and peace.

Great events can be haſtened or retarded only by perſons of elevated dignity. Before the greatneſs diſplayed in Milton's poem, all other greatneſs ſhrinks away. The weakeſt of his agents are the higheſt and nobleſt of human beings, the original parents of mankind; with whoſe actions the elements conſented; on whoſe rectitude, or deviation of will, depended the ſtate of terreſtrial nature, and the condition of all the future inhabitants of the globe.

Of

Of the other agents in the poem, the chief are ſuch as it is irreverence to name on ſlight occaſions. The reſt were lower powers;

—of which the leaſt could wield
Thoſe elements, and arm him with the force
Of all their regions.

powers, which only the controul of Omnipotence reſtrains from laying creation waſte, and filling the vaſt expanſe of ſpace with ruin and confuſion. To diſplay the motives and actions of beings thus ſuperiour, ſo far as human reaſon can examine them, or human imagination repreſent them, is the taſk which this mighty poet has undertaken and performed.

In

In the examination of epick poems much ſpeculation is commonly employed upon the *characters*. The characters in the *Paradiſe Loſt*, which admit of examination, are thoſe of angels and of man; of angels good and evil; of man in his innocent and ſinful ſtate.

Among the angels, the virtue of Raphael is mild and placid, of eaſy condeſcenſion and free communication; that of Michael is regal and lofty, and, as may ſeem, attentive to the dignity of his own nature. Abdiel and Gabriel appear occaſionally, and act as every incident requires; the ſolitary fidelity of Abdiel is very amiably painted.

Of the evil angels the characters are more diverſified. To Satan, as Addiſon

ſon obſerves, ſuch ſentiments are given as ſuit *the moſt exalted and moſt depraved being*. Milton has been cenſured, by Clark, for the impiety which ſometimes breaks from Satan's mouth. For there are thoughts, as he juſtly remarks, which no obſervation of character can juſtify, becauſe no good man would willingly permit them to paſs, however tranſiently, through his own mind. To make Satan ſpeak as a rebel, without any ſuch expreſſions as might taint the reader's imagination, was indeed one of the great difficulties in Milton's undertaking, and I cannot but think that he has extricated himſelf with great happineſs. There is in Satan's ſpeeches little that can give pain to a pious ear. The lan-

guage of rebellion cannot be the ſame with that of obedience. The malignity of Satan foams in haughtineſs and obſtinacy; but his expreſſions are commonly general, and no otherwiſe offenſive than as they are wicked.

The other chiefs of the celeſtial rebellion are very judiciouſly diſcriminated in the firſt and ſecond books; and the ferocious character of Moloch appears, both in the battle and the council, with exact conſiſtency.

To Adam and to Eve are given, during their innocence, ſuch ſentiments as innocence can generate and utter. Their love is pure benevolence and mutual veneration; their repaſts are without luxury, and their diligence without toil.

toil. Their addreſſes to their Maker have little more than the voice of admiration and gratitude. Fruition left them nothing to aſk, and Innocence left them nothing to fear.

But with guilt enter diſtruſt and diſcord, mutual accuſation, and ſtubborn ſelf-defence; they regard each other with alienated minds, and dread their Creator as the avenger of their tranſgreſſion. At laſt they ſeek ſhelter in his mercy, ſoften to repentance, and melt in ſupplication. Both before and after the Fall, the ſuperiority of Adam is diligently ſuſtained.

Of the *probable* and the *marvellous*, two parts of a vulgar epick poem, which immerge the critick in deep conſidera-

tion, the *Paradiſe Loſt* requires little to be ſaid. It contains the hiſtory of a miracle, of Creation and Redemption; it diſplays the power and the mercy of the Supreme Being; the probable therefore is marvellous, and the marvellous is probable. The ſubſtance of the narrative is truth; and as truth allows no choice, it is, like neceſſity, ſuperior to rule. To the accidental or adventitious parts, as to every thing human, ſome ſlight exceptions may be made. But the main fabrick is immovably ſupported.

It is juſtly remarked by Addiſon, that this poem has, by the nature of its ſubject, the advantage above all others, that it is univerſally and perpetually in-

tereſting. All mankind will, through all ages, bear the ſame relation to Adam and to Eve, and muſt partake of that good and evil which extend to themſelves.

Of the *machinery*, ſo called from Θεὸς ἀπὸ μηχανῆς, by which is meant the occaſional interpoſition of ſupernatural power, another fertile topick of critical remarks, here is no room to ſpeak, becauſe every thing is done under the immediate and viſible direction of Heaven; but the rule is ſo far obſerved, that no part of the action could have been accompliſhed by any other means.

Of *epiſodes*, I think there are only two, contained in Raphael's relation of the war in heaven, and Michael's pro-

phetick account of the changes to happen in this world. Both are closely connected with the great action; one was neceſſary to Adam as a warning, the other as a conſolation.

To the compleatneſs or *integrity* of the deſign nothing can be objected; it has diſtinctly and clearly what Ariſtotle requires, a beginning, a middle, and an end. There is perhaps no poem, of the ſame length, from which ſo little can be taken without apparent mutilation. Here are no funeral games, nor is there any long deſcription of a ſhield. The ſhort digreſſions at the beginning of the third, ſeventh, and ninth books, might doubtleſs be ſpared; but ſuperfluities ſo beautiful, who would take away?

away? or who does not wiſh that the author of the *Iliad* had gratified ſucceeding ages with a little knowledge of himſelf? Perhaps no paſſages are more frequently or more attentively read than thoſe extrinſick paragraphs; and, ſince the end of poetry is pleaſure, that cannot be unpoetical with which all are pleaſed.

The queſtions, whether the action of the poem be ſtrictly *one*, whether the poem can be properly termed *heroick*, and who is the hero, are raiſed by ſuch readers as draw their principles of judgement rather from books than from reaſon. Milton, though he intituled *Paradiſe Loſt* only a *poem*, yet calls it himſelf *heroick ſong*. Dryden, petu-

lantly and indecently, denies the heroiſm of Adam, becauſe he was overcome; but there is no reaſon why the hero ſhould not be unfortunate, except eſtabliſhed practice, ſince ſucceſs and virtue do not go neceſſarily together. Cato is the hero of Lucan; but Lucan's authority will not be ſuffered by Quintilian to decide. However, if ſucceſs be neceſſary, Adam's deceiver was at laſt cruſhed; Adam was reſtored to his Maker's favour, and therefore may ſecurely reſume his human rank.

After the ſcheme and fabrick of the poem, muſt be conſidered its component parts, the ſentiments and the diction.

The

The *ſentiments*, as expreſſive of manners, or appropriated to characters, are, for the greater part, unexceptionably juſt.

Splendid paſſages, containing leſſons of morality, or precepts of prudence, occur ſeldom. Such is the original formation of this poem, that, as it admits no human manners till the Fall, it can give little aſſiſtance to human conduct. Its end is to raiſe the thoughts above ſublunary cares or pleaſures. Yet the praiſe of that fortitude, with which Abdiel maintained his ſingularity of virtue againſt the ſcorn of multitudes, may be accommodated to all times; and Raphael's reproof of Adam's curioſity after the planetary motions, with

with the anſwer returned by Adam, may be confidently oppoſed to any rule of life which any poet has delivered.

The thoughts which are occaſionally called forth in the progreſs, are ſuch as could only be produced by an imagination in the higheſt degree fervid and active, to which materials were ſupplied by inceſſant ſtudy and unlimited curioſity. The heat of Milton's mind might be ſaid to ſublimate his learning, to throw off into his work the ſpirit of ſcience, unmingled with its groſſer parts.

He had conſidered creation in its whole extent, and his deſcriptions are therefore learned. He had accuſtomed his imagination to unreſtrained indulgence,

and

and his conceptions therefore were extenſive. The characteriſtick quality of his poem is ſublimity. He ſometimes deſcends to the elegant, but his element is the great. He can occaſionally inveſt himſelf with grace; but his natural port is gigantick loftineſs*. He can pleaſe when pleaſure is required; but it is his peculiar power to aſtoniſh.

He ſeems to have been well acquainted with his own genius, and to know what it was that Nature had beſtowed upon him more bountifully than upon others; the power of diſplaying the vaſt, illuminating the ſplendid, en-

* Algarotti terms it *giganteſca ſublimità Miltoniana.*

forcing

forcing the awful, darkening the gloomy, and aggravating the dreadful: he therefore choſe a ſubject on which too much could not be ſaid, on which he might tire his fancy without the cenſure of extravagance.

The appearances of nature, and the occurrences of life, did not ſatiate his appetite of greatneſs. To paint things as they are, requires a minute attention, and employs the memory rather than the fancy. Milton's delight was to ſport in the wide regions of poſſibility; reality was a ſcene too narrow for his mind. He ſent his faculties out upon diſcovery, into worlds where only imagination can travel, and delighted to form new modes of exiſtence, and furniſh ſentiment and action

action to ſuperior beings, to trace the counſels of hell, or accompany the choirs of heaven.

But he could not be always in other worlds: he muſt ſometimes reviſit earth, and tell of things viſible and known. When he cannot raiſe wonder by the ſublimity of his mind, he gives delight by its fertility.

Whatever be his ſubject, he never fails to fill the imagination. But his images and deſcriptions of the ſcenes or operations of Nature do not ſeem to be always copied from original form, nor to have the freſhneſs, racineſs, and energy of immediate obſervation. He ſaw Nature, as Dryden expreſſes it, *through the ſpectacles of books*; and on moſt

moſt occaſions calls learning to his aſſiſtance. The garden of Eden brings to his mind the vale of *Enna*, where Proſerpine was gathering flowers. Satan makes his way through fighting elements, like *Argo* between the *Cyanean* rocks, or *Ulyſſes* between the two *Sicilian* whirlpools, when he ſhunned *Charybdis* on the *larboard*. The mythological alluſions have been juſtly cenſured, as not being always uſed with notice of their vanity; but they contribute variety to the narration, and produce an alternate exerciſe of the memory and the fancy.

His ſimilies are leſs numerous, and more various, than thoſe of his predeceſſors. But he does not confine himſelf

ſelf within the limits of rigorous compariſon: his great excellence is amplitude, and he expands the adventitious image beyond the dimenſions which the occaſion required. Thus, comparing the ſhield of Satan to the orb of the Moon, he crowds the imagination with the diſcovery of the teleſcope, and all the wonders which the teleſcope diſcovers.

Of his moral ſentiments it is hardly praiſe to affirm that they excel thoſe of all other poets; for this ſuperiority he was indebted to his acquaintance with the ſacred writings. The ancient epick poets, wanting the light of Revelation, were very unſkilful teachers of virtue: their principal characters may be great,

but

but they are not amiable. The reader may riſe from their works with a greater degree of active or paſſive fortitude, and ſometimes of prudence; but he will be able to carry away few precepts of juſtice, and none of mercy.

From the Italian writers it appears, that the advantages of even Chriſtian knowledge may be poſſeſſed in vain. Arioſto's pravity is generally known; and though the *Deliverance of Jeruſalem* may be conſidered as a ſacred ſubject, the poet has been very ſparing of moral inſtruction.

In Milton every line breathes ſanctity of thought, and purity of manners, except when the train of the narration requires the introduction of the rebellious ſpirits;

ſpirits; and even they are compelled to acknowledge their ſubjection to God, in ſuch a manner as excites reverence and confirms piety.

Of human beings there are but two; but thoſe two are the parents of mankind, venerable before their fall for dignity and innocence, and amiable after it for repentance and ſubmiſſion. In their firſt ſtate their affection is tender without weakneſs, and their piety ſublime without preſumption. When they have ſinned, they ſhew how diſcord begins in natural frailty, and how it ought to ceaſe in mutual forbearance; how confidence of the divine favour is forfeited by ſin, and how hope of pardon may be obtained by penitence and

prayer. A ſtate of innocence we can only conceive, if indeed, in our preſent miſery, it be poſſible to conceive it; but the ſentiments and worſhip proper to a fallen and offending being, we have all to learn, as we have all to practiſe.

The poet, whatever be done, is always great. Our progenitors, in their firſt ſtate, converſed with angels; even when folly and ſin had degraded them, they had not in their humiliation *the port of mean ſuitors*; and they riſe again to reverential regard, when we find that their prayers were heard.

As human paſſions did not enter the world before the Fall, there is in the *Paradiſe Loſt* little opportunity for the pathetick; but what little there is has not

not been loſt. That paſſion which is peculiar to rational nature, the anguiſh ariſing from the conſciouſneſs of tranſgreſſion, and the horrours attending the ſenſe of the Divine diſpleaſure, are very juſtly deſcribed and forcibly impreſſed. But the paſſions are moved only on one occaſion; ſublimity is the general and prevailing quality in this poem; ſublimity variouſly modified, ſometimes deſcriptive, ſometimes argumentative.

The defects and faults of *Paradiſe Loſt*, for faults and defects every work of man muſt have, it is the buſineſs of impartial criticiſm to diſcover. As, in diſplaying the excellence of Milton, I have not made long quotations, becauſe of ſelecting beauties there had

been no end, I ſhall in the ſame general manner mention that which ſeems to deſerve cenſure; for what Engliſhman can take delight in tranſcribing paſſages, which, if they leſſen the reputation of Milton, diminiſh in ſome degree the honour of our country?

The generality of my ſcheme does not admit the frequent notice of verbal inaccuracies; which Bentley, perhaps better ſkilled in grammar than in poetry, has often found, though he ſometimes made them, and which he imputed to the obtruſions of a reviſer whom the author's blindneſs obliged him to employ. A ſuppoſition raſh and groundleſs, if he thought it true; and vile

vile and pernicious, if, as is ſaid, he in private allowed it to be falſe.

The plan of *Paradiſe Loſt* has this inconvenience, that it compriſes neither human actions nor human manners. The man and woman who act and ſuffer, are in a ſtate which no other man or woman can ever know. The reader finds no tranſaction in which he can be engaged; beholds no condition in which he can by any effort of imagination place himſelf; he has, therefore, little natural curioſity or ſympathy.

We all, indeed, feel the effects of Adam's diſobedience; we all ſin like Adam, and like him muſt all bewail our offences; we have reſtleſs and inſidious enemies in the fallen angels, and

in the bleſſed ſpirits we have guardians and friends; in the Redemption of mankind we hope to be included; and in the deſcription of heaven and hell we are ſurely intereſted, as we are all to reſide hereafter either in the regions of horror or of bliſs.

But theſe truths are too important to be new; they have been taught to our infancy; they have mingled with our ſolitary thoughts and familiar converſation, and are habitually interwoven with the whole texture of life. Being therefore not new, they raiſe no unaccuſtomed emotion in the mind; what we knew before we cannot learn; what is not unexpected cannot ſurpriſe.

Of

Of the ideas ſuggeſted by theſe awful ſcenes, from ſome we recede with reverence, except when ſtated hours require their aſſociation; and from others we ſhrink with horror, or admit them only as ſalutary inflictions, as counterpoiſes to our intereſts and paſſions. Such images rather obſtruct the career of fancy than incite it.

Pleaſure and terrour are indeed the genuine ſources of poetry; but poetical pleaſure muſt be ſuch as human imagination can at leaſt conceive, and poetical terrour ſuch as human ſtrength and fortitude may combat. The good and evil of Eternity are too ponderous for the wings of wit; the mind ſinks under them in paſſive helpleſſneſs, content

with calm belief and humble adoration.

Known truths, however, may take a different appearance, and be conveyed to the mind by a new train of intermediate images. This Milton has undertaken, and performed with pregnancy and vigour of mind peculiar to himſelf. Whoever conſiders the few radical poſitions which the Scriptures afforded him, will wonder by what energetick operation he expanded them to ſuch extent, and ramified them to ſo much variety, reſtrained as he was by religious reverence from licentiouſneſs of fiction.

Here is a full diſplay of the united force of ſtudy and genius; of a great accumulation of materials, with judgement

ment to digeſt, and fancy to combine them: Milton was able to ſelect from nature, or from ſtory, from ancient fable, or from modern ſcience, whatever could illuſtrate or adorn his thoughts. An accumulation of knowledge impregnated his mind, fermented by ſtudy, and ſublimed by imagination.

It has been therefore ſaid, without an indecent hyperbole, by one of his encomiaſts, that in reading *Paradiſe Loſt* we read a book of univerſal knowledge.

But original deficience cannot be ſupplied. The want of human intereſt is always felt. *Paradiſe Loſt* is one of the books which the reader admires and lays down, and forgets to take up again. Its peruſal

is

is a duty rather than a pleaſure. We read Milton for inſtruction, retire harraſſed and overburdened, and look elſewhere for recreation; we deſert our maſter, and ſeek for companions.

Another inconvenience of Milton's deſign is, that it requires the deſcription of what cannot be deſcribed, the agency of ſpirits. He ſaw that immateriality ſupplied no images, and that he could not ſhow angels acting but by inſtruments of action; he therefore inveſted them with form and matter. This, being neceſſary, was therefore defenſible; and he ſhould have ſecured the conſiſtency of his ſyſtem, by keeping immateriality out of ſight, and enticing his reader to drop it from his thoughts. But he has

unhappily perplexed his poetry with his philoſophy. His infernal and celeſtial powers are ſometimes pure ſpirit, and ſometimes animated body. When Satan walks with his lance upon the *burning marle*, he has a body; when in his paſſage between hell and the new world, he is in danger of ſinking in the vacuity, and is ſupported by a guſt of riſing vapours, he has a body; when he animates the toad, he ſeems to be mere ſpirit, that can penetrate matter at pleaſure; when he *ſtarts up in his own ſhape*, he has at leaſt a determined form; and when he is brought before Gabriel, he has *a ſpear and ſhield*, which he had the power of hiding in the toad, though the

arms

arms of the contending angels are evidently material.

The vulgar inhabitants of Pandæmonium being *incorporeal ſpirits*, are *at large, though without number*, in a limited ſpace; yet in the battle, when they were overwhelmed by mountains, their armour hurt them, *cruſhed in upon their ſubſtance, now grown groſs by ſinning*. This likewiſe happened to the uncorrupted angels, who were overthrown *the ſooner for their arms*, for *unarmed they might eaſily as ſpirits have evaded by contraction, or remove*. Even as ſpirits they are hardly ſpiritual; for *contraction* and *remove* are images of matter; but if they could have eſcaped without their armour, they might have

eſcaped from it, and left only the empty cover to be battered. Uriel, when he rides on a ſun-beam, is material: Satan is material when he is afraid of the proweſs of Adam.

The confuſion of ſpirit and matter which pervades the whole narration of the war of heaven fills it with incongruity; and the book, in which it is related, is, I believe, the favourite of children, and gradually neglected as knowledge is increaſed.

After the operation of immaterial agents, which cannot be explained, may be conſidered that of allegorical perſons, which have no real exiſtence. To exalt cauſes into agents, to inveſt abſtract ideas with form, and animate them with acti-

activity, has always been the right of poetry. But ſuch airy beings are, for the moſt part, ſuffered only to do their natural office; and retire. Thus Fame tells a tale, and Victory hovers over a general, or perches on a ſtandard; but Fame and Victory can do no more. To give them any real employment, or aſcribe to them any material agency, is to make them allegorical no longer, but to ſhock the mind by aſcribing effects to non-entity. In the *Prometheus* of Æſchylus, we ſee *Violence* and *Strength*, and in the *Alceſtis* of Euripides, we ſee *Death* brought upon the ſtage, all as active perſons of the drama; but no precedents can juſtify abſurdity.

Mil-

Milton's allegory of Sin and Death is undoubtedly faulty. Sin is indeed the mother of Death, and may be allowed to be the portreſs of hell; but when they ſtop the journey of Satan, a journey deſcribed as real, and when Death offers him battle, the allegory is broken. That Sin and Death ſhould have ſhewn the way to hell might have been allowed; but they cannot facilitate the paſſage by building a bridge, becauſe the difficulty of Satan's paſſage is deſcribed as real and ſenſible, and the bridge ought to be only figurative. The hell aſſigned to the rebellious ſpirits is deſcribed as not leſs local than the reſidence of man. It is placed in ſome diſtant part of ſpace, ſeparated from the regions of harmony and

and order by a chaotick waſte and an unoccupied vacuity; but *Sin* and *Death* worked up a *mole* of *aggregated ſoil*, cemented with *aſphaltus*; a work too bulky for ideal architects.

This unſkilful allegory appears to me one of the greateſt faults of the poem; and to this there was no temptation, but the author's opinion of its beauty.

To the conduct of the narrative ſome objections may be made. Satan is with great expectation brought before Gabriel in Paradiſe, and is ſuffered to go away unmoleſted. The creation of man is repreſented as the conſequence of the vacuity left in heaven by the expulſion of the rebels, yet Satan mentions it as a report *riſe in heaven* before his departure.

To

To find ſentiments for the ſtate of innocence, was very difficult; and ſomething of anticipation perhaps is now and then diſcovered. Adam's diſcourſe of dreams ſeems not to be the ſpeculation of a new-created being. I know not whether his anſwer to the angel's reproof for curioſity does not want ſomething of propriety: it is the ſpeech of a man acquainted with many other men. Some philoſophical notions, eſpecially when the philoſophy is falſe, might have been better omitted. The angel, in a compariſon, ſpeaks of *timorous deer*, before deer were yet timorous, and before Adam could underſtand the compariſon.

Dryden remarks, that Milton has ſome flats among his elevations. This is only to ſay that all the parts are not equal. In every work one part muſt be for the ſake of others; a palace muſt have paſſages; a poem muſt have tranſitions. It is no more to be required that wit ſhould always be blazing, than that the ſun ſhould always ſtand at noon. In a great work there is a viciſſitude of luminous and opaque parts, as there is in the world a ſucceſſion of day and night. Milton, when he has expatiated in the ſky, may be allowed ſometimes to reviſit earth; for what other author ever ſoared ſo high, or ſuſtained his flight ſo long?

Mil-

Milton, being well verſed in the Italian poets, appears to have borrowed often from them; and, as every man learns ſomething from his companions, his deſire of imitating Arioſto's levity has diſgraced his work with the *Paradiſe of Fools*; a fiction not in itſelf ill-imagined, but too ludicrous for its place.

His play on words, in which he delights too often; his equivocations which Bentley endeavours to defend by the example of the ancients; his unneceſſary and ungraceful uſe of terms of art, it is not neceſſary to mention, becauſe they are eaſily remarked, and generally cenſured, and at laſt bear ſo little proportion to the whole, that they ſcarcely deſerve the attention of a critick.

Such are the faults of that wonderful performance *Paradiſe Loſt*; which he who can put in balance with its beauties muſt be conſidered not as nice but as dull, as leſs to be cenſured for want of candour than pitied for want of ſenſibility.

Of *Paradiſe Regained*, the general judgement ſeems now to be right, that it is in many parts elegant, and every-where inſtructive. It was not to be ſuppoſed that the writer of *Paradiſe Loſt* could ever write without great effuſions of fancy, and exalted precepts of wiſdom. The baſis of *Paradiſe Regained* is narrow; a dialogue without action can never pleaſe like an union of the narrative and dramatick powers. Had this

poem

poem been written not by Milton, but by ſome imitator, it would have claimed and received univerſal praiſe.

If *Paradiſe Regained* has been too much depreciated, *Samſon Agoniſtes* has in requital been too much admired. It could only be by long prejudice, and the bigotry of learning, that Milton could prefer the ancient tragedies, with their encumbrance of a chorus, to the exhibitions of the French and Engliſh ſtages; and it is only by a blind confidence in the reputation of Milton, that a drama can be praiſed in which the intermediate parts have neither cauſe nor conſequence, neither haſten nor retard the cataſtrophe.

In this tragedy are however many particular beauties, many juſt ſentiments and ſtriking lines; but it wants that power of attracting the attention which a well-connected plan produces.

Milton would not have excelled in dramatick writing; he knew human nature only in the groſs, and had never ſtudied the ſhades of character, nor the combinations of concurring, or the perplexity of contending paſſions. He had read much, and knew what books could teach; but had mingled little in the world, and was deficient in the knowledge which experience muſt confer.

Through all his greater works there prevails an uniform peculiarity of *Diction*,

tion, a mode and caſt of expreſſion which bears little reſemblance to that of any former writer, and which is ſo far removed from common uſe, that an unlearned reader, when he firſt opens his book, finds himſelf ſurpriſed by a new language.

This novelty has been, by thoſe who can find nothing wrong in Milton, imputed to his laborious endeavours after words ſuitable to the grandeur of his ideas. *Our language*, ſays Addiſon, *ſunk under him*. But the truth is, that, both in proſe and verſe, he had formed his ſtile by a perverſe and pedantick principle. He was deſirous to uſe Engliſh words with a foreign idiom. This in all his proſe is diſcovered and condemned; for

there judgment operates freely, neither fettered by the beauty nor awed by the dignity of his thoughts; but ſuch is the power of his poetry, that his call is obeyed without reſiſtance, the reader feels himſelf in captivity to a higher and a nobler mind, and criticiſm ſinks in admiration.

Milton's ſtile was not modified by his ſubject: what is ſhown with greater extent in *Paradiſe Loſt*, may be found in *Comus*. One ſource of his peculiarity was his familiarity with the Tuſcan poets: the diſpoſition of his words is, I think, frequently Italian; perhaps ſometimes combined with other tongues. Of him, at laſt, may be ſaid what Jonſon ſays of Spenſer, that *he wrote no lan-*

language, but has formed what *Butler* calls a *Babyloniſh Dialect*, in itſelf harſh and barbarous; but made by exalted genius, and extenſive learning, the vehicle of ſo much inſtruction and ſo much pleaſure, that, like other lovers, we find grace in its deformity.

Whatever be the faults of his diction, he cannot want the praiſe of copiouſneſs and variety: he was maſter of his language in its full extent; and has ſelected the melodious words with ſuch diligence, that from his book alone the Art of Engliſh Poetry might be learned.

After his diction, ſomething muſt be ſaid of his *verſification*. *The meaſure*, he ſays, *is the Engliſh heroick verſe without rhyme*. Of this mode he had many exam-

examples among the Italians, and ſome in his own country. The earl of Surry is ſaid to have tranſlated one of Virgil's books without rhyme; and, beſides our tragedies, a few ſhort poems had appeared in blank verſe; particularly one tending to reconcile the nation to Raleigh's wild attempt upon Guiana, and probably written by Raleigh himſelf. Theſe petty performances cannot be ſuppoſed to have much influenced Milton, who more probably took his hint from Triſino's *Italia Liberata*; and, finding blank verſe eaſier than rhyme, was deſirous of perſuading himſelf that it is better.

Rhyme, he ſays, and ſays truly, *is no neceſſary adjunct of true poetry*. But perhaps,

haps, of poetry as a mental operation, metre or muſick is no neceſſary adjunct: it is however by the muſick of metre that poetry has been diſcriminated in all languages; and in languages melodiouſly conſtructed, by a due proportion of long and ſhort ſyllables, metre is ſufficient. But one language cannot communicate its rules to another: where metre is ſcanty and imperfect, ſome help is neceſſary. The muſick of the Engliſh heroick line ſtrikes the ear ſo faintly that it is eaſily loſt, unleſs all the ſyllables of every line co-operate together: this co-operation can be only obtained by the preſervation of every verſe unmingled with another, as a diſtinct ſyſtem of ſounds; and this diſtinctneſs is ob-

obtained and preſerved by the artifice of rhyme. The variety of pauſes, ſo much boaſted by the lovers of blank verſe, changes the meaſures of an Engliſh poet to the periods of a declaimer; and there are only a few ſkilful and happy readers of Milton, who enable their audience to perceive where the lines end or begin. *Blank verſe*, ſaid an ingenious critick, *ſeems to be verſe only to the eye.*

Poetry may ſubſiſt without rhyme, but Engliſh poetry will not often pleaſe; nor can rhyme ever be ſafely ſpared but where the ſubject is able to ſupport itſelf. Blank verſe makes ſome approach to that which is called the *lapidary ſtile*; has neither the eaſineſs of proſe, nor the melody of numbers, and therefore tires

tires by long continuance. Of the Italian writers without rhyme, whom Milton alleges as precedents, not one is popular; what reaſon could urge in its defence, has been confuted by the ear.

But, whatever be the advantage of rhyme, I cannot prevail on myſelf to wiſh that Milton had been a rhymer; for I cannot wiſh his work to be other than it is; yet, like other heroes, he is to be admired rather than imitated. He that thinks himſelf capable of aſtoniſhing, may write blank verſe; but thoſe that hope only to pleaſe, muſt condeſcend to rhyme.

The higheſt praiſe of genius is original invention. Milton cannot be ſaid to

have contrived the ſtructure of an epick poem, and therefore muſt yield to that vigour and amplitude of mind to which all generations muſt be indebted for the art of poetical narration, for the texture of the fable, the variation of incidents, the interpoſition or dialogue, and all the ſtratagems that ſurpriſe and enchain attention. But, of all the borrowers from Homer, Milton is perhaps the leaſt indebted. He was naturally a thinker for himſelf, confident of his own abilities, and diſdainful of help or hindrance: he did not refuſe admiſſion to the thoughts or images of his predeceſſors, but he did not ſeek them. From his contemporaries he neither courted

courted nor received ſupport; there is in his writings nothing by which the pride of other authors might be gratified, or favour gained; no exchange of praiſe, nor ſolicitation of ſupport. His great works were performed under diſcountenance, and in blindneſs, but difficulties vaniſhed at his touch; he was born for whatever is arduous, and his work is not the greateſt of heroick poems, only becauſe it is not the firſt.

BUTLER.

OF the great author of Hudibras there is a life prefixed to the later edition of his poem, by an unknown writer, and therefore of diſputable authority; and ſome account is incidentally given by Wood, who confeſſes the uncertainty of his own narrative; more however than they knew cannot now be learned, and nothing remains but to compare and copy them.

SAMUEL BUTLER was born in the pariſh of Strenſham in Worceſterſhire,

according to his biographer, in 1612; but Mr. Longueville, the ſon of Butler's principal friend, informed the author of the "General Dictionary" that he was born in 1600.

His father's condition is variouſly repreſented. Wood mentions him as competently wealthy; but the other ſays he was an honeſt farmer with ſome ſmall eſtate, who made a ſhift to educate his ſon at the grammar-ſchool of Worceſter, under Mr. Henry Bright, from whoſe care he removed for a ſhort time to Cambridge; but, for want of money, was never made a member of any college. Wood leaves us rather doubtful whether he went to Cambridge or Oxford; but at laſt makes him paſs

ſix

ſix or ſeven years at Cambridge, without knowing in what hall or college: yet it can hardly be imagined that he lived ſo long in either univerſity, but as belonging to one houſe or another; and it is ſtill leſs likely that he could have ſo long inhabited a place of learning with ſo little diſtinction as to leave his reſidence uncertain.

Wood has his information from his brother, whoſe narrative placed him at Cambridge, in oppoſition to that of his neighbours which ſent him to Oxford. The brother's ſeems the beſt authority, till, by confeſſing his inability to tell his hall or college, he gives reaſon to ſuſpect that he was reſolved to beſtow on him an academical education; but

durſt not name a college, for fear of detection.

He was, for ſome time, according to the author of his life, clerk to Mr. Jefferys of Earl's-Croom in Worceſterſhire, an eminent juſtice of the peace. In his ſervice he had not only leiſure for ſtudy, but for recreation: his amuſements were muſick and painting; and the reward of his pencil was the friendſhip of the celebrated Cooper.

He was afterwards admitted into the family of the counteſs of Kent, where he had the uſe of a library; and ſo much recommended himſelf to Selden, that he was often employed by him in literary buſineſs. Selden, as is well known, was ſteward to the coun-

teſs, and is ſuppoſed to have gained much of his wealth by managing her eſtate.

In what character Butler was admitted into that lady's ſervice, how long he continued in it, and why he left it, is, like the other incidents of his life, utterly unknown.

The viciſſitudes of his condition placed him afterwards in the family of Sir Samuel Luke, one of Cromwel's officers. Here he obſerved ſo much of the character of the ſectaries, that he is ſaid to have written or begun his poem at this time; and it is likely that ſuch a deſign would be formed in a place where he ſaw the principles and practices of the rebels, audacious and

undiſguiſed in the confidence of ſucceſs.

At length the king returned, and the time came in which loyalty hoped for its reward. Butler, however, was only made ſecretary to the earl of Carbury, preſident of the principality of Wales; who conferred on him the ſtewardſhip of Ludlow Caſtle, when the Court of the Marches was revived.

In this part of his life, he married Mrs. Herbert, a gentlewoman of a good family; and lived, ſays Wood, upon her fortune, having ſtudied the common law, but never practiſed it. A fortune ſhe had, ſays his biographer, but it was loſt by bad ſecurities.

In 1663 was publiſhed the firſt part, containing three cantos, of the poem of Hudibras, which, as Prior relates, was made known at court by the taſte and influence of the earl of Dorſet. When it was known, it was neceſſarily admired: the king quoted, the courtiers ſtudied, and the whole party of the royaliſts applauded it. Every eye watched for the golden ſhower which was to fall upon the author, who certainly was not without his part in the general expectation.

In 1664 the ſecond part appeared; the curioſity of the nation was rekindled, and the writer was again praiſed and elated. But praiſe was his whole reward. Clarendon, ſays

Wood, gave him reaſon to hope for "places and employments of value and "credit;" but no ſuch advantages did he ever obtain. It is reported that the king once gave him three hundred guineas; but of this temporary bounty I find no proof.

Wood relates that he was ſecretary to Villiers duke of Buckingham, when he was Chancellor of Cambridge: this is doubted by the other writer, who yet allows the duke to have been his frequent benefactor. That both theſe accounts are falſe there is reaſon to ſuſpect, from a ſtory told by Packe, in his account of the life of Wycherley, and from ſome verſes which Mr. Thyer has publiſhed in the author's remains.

"Mr.

"Mr. Wycherley," ſays Packe, "had "always laid hold of any opportunity "which offered of repreſenting to the "duke of Buckingham how well Mr. "Butler had deſerved of the royal fa- "mily, by writing his inimitable Hu- "dibras; and that it was a reproach to "the court that a perſon of his loyalty "and wit ſhould ſuffer in obſcurity, "and under the wants he did. The "duke always ſeemed to hearken to "him with attention enough; and, af- "ter ſome time, undertook to recom- "mend his pretenſions to his majeſty. "Mr. Wycherley, in hopes to keep "him ſteady to his word, obtained of "his grace to name a day, when he "might introduce that modeſt and un-

"fortunate

" fortunate poet to his new patron. At
" laſt an appointment was made, and
" the place of meeting was agreed to
" be the Roebuck. Mr. Butler and
" his friend attended accordingly: the
" duke joined them; but, as the d---l
" would have it, the door of the room
" where they ſat was open, and his
" grace, who had ſeated himſelf near
" it, obſerving a pimp of his acquain-
" tance (the creature too was a knight)
" trip by with a brace of ladies, im-
" mediately quitted his engagement, to
" follow another kind of buſineſs, at
" which he was more ready than in
" doing good offices to men of deſert;
" though no one was better qualified
" than he, both in regard to his for-

" tune

"tune and underſtanding, to protect
"them; and from that time to the day
"of his death, poor Butler never found
"the leaſt effect of his promiſe!"

Such is the ſtory. The verſes are written with a degree of acrimony, ſuch as neglect and diſappointment might naturally excite; and ſuch as it would be hard to imagine Butler capable of expreſſing againſt a man who had any claim to his gratitude.

Notwithſtanding this diſcouragement and neglect, he ſtill proſecuted his deſign; and in 1678 publiſhed the third part, which ſtill leaves the poem imperfect and abrupt. How much more he originally intended; or with what events

events the action was to be concluded, it is vain to conjecture. Nor can it be thought ſtrange that he ſhould ſtop here, however unexpectedly. To write without reward is ſufficiently unpleaſing; and, if his birth be placed right by Mr. Longueville, he had now arrived at an age when he might well think it proper to be in jeſt no longer.

He died in 1680; and Mr. Longueville, having unſucceſsfully ſolicited a ſubſcription for his interment in Weſtminſter Abbey, buried him at his own coſt in the church-yard of Covent Garden. Dr. Simon Patrick read the ſervice.

About ſixty years afterwards, Mr. Barber, a printer, mayor of London, and

and a friend to Mr. Butler's principles, beſtowed on him a monument in Weſtminſter Abbey, thus inſcribed:

M. S.

SAMUELIS BUTLERI,

Qui *Strenſhamiæ* in agro *Vigorn.* nat. 1612, obiit *Lond.* 1680.

Vir doctus imprimis, acer, integer;
Operibus Ingenii, non item præmiis, fœlix:
Satyrici apud nos Carminis Artifex egregius;
Quo ſimulatæ Religionis Larvam detraxit,
Et Perduellium ſcelera liberrime exagitavit:
Scriptorum in ſuo genere, Primus et Poſtremus.
Ne, cui vivo deerant ferè omnia,
Deeſſet etiam mortuo Tumulus,
Hoc tandem poſito marmore, curavit
JOHANNES BARBER, Civis *Londinenſis*, 1721.

After

After his death were publiſhed three ſmall volumes of his poſthumous works: I know not by whom collected, or by what authority aſcertained; and, lately, two volumes more have been printed by Mr. Thyer of Mancheſter, indubitably genuine. From none of theſe pieces can his life be traced, or his character diſcovered. Some verſes, in the laſt collection, ſhew him to have been among thoſe who ridiculed the inſtitution of the Royal Society, of which the enemies were for ſome time very numerous and very acrimonious, for what reaſon it is hard to conceive, ſince the philoſophers profeſſed not to advance doctrines, but to produce facts; and the moſt zealous enemy of innovation

tion muſt admit the gradual progreſs of experience, however he may oppoſe hypothetical temerity.

In this miſt of obſcurity paſſed the life of Butler, a man whoſe name can only periſh with his language. The date of his birth is doubtful; the mode and place of his education are unknown; the events of his life are variouſly related; and all that can be told with certainty is, that he was poor.

THE poem of Hudibras is one of thoſe compoſitions of which a nation may juſtly boaſt; as the images which it exhibits are domeſtick, the ſenti-

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ments unborrowed and unexpected, and the ſtrain of diction original and peculiar. We muſt not, however, ſuffer the pride which we aſſume as the countrymen of Butler to make any encroachment upon juſtice, nor appropriate thoſe honours which others have a right to ſhare. The poem of Hudibras is not wholly Engliſh; the original idea is to be found in the hiſtory of Don Quixote; a book to which a mind of the greateſt powers may be indebted without diſgrace.

Cervantes ſhews a man, who, having, by the inceſſant peruſal of incredible tales, ſubjected his underſtanding to his imagination, and familiariſed his mind by pertinacious meditation to think

on

of incredible events and ſcenes of impoſſible exiſtence, goes out in the pride of knighthood, to redreſs wrongs, and defend virgins, to reſcue captive princeſſes, and tumble uſurpers from their thrones; attended by a ſquire, whoſe cunning, too low for the ſuſpicion of a generous mind, enables him often to cheat his maſter.

The hero of Butler is a Preſbyterian Juſtice, who, in the confidence of legal authority, and the rage of zealous ignorance, ranges the country to repreſs ſuperſtition and correct abuſes, accompanied by an Independant clerk, diſputatious and obſtinate, with whom he often debates, but never conquers him.

Cervantes had ſo much kindneſs for Don Quixote, that, however he em-

barraſſes him with abſurd diſtreſſes, he gives him ſo much ſenſe and virtue as may preſerve our eſteem: wherever he is, or whatever he does, he is made by matchleſs dexterity commonly ridiculous, but never contemptible.

But for poor Hudibras, his poet had no tenderneſs: he chuſes not that any pity ſhould be ſhewn or reſpect paid him: he gives him up at once to laughter and contempt, without any quality that can dignify or protect him.

In forming the character of Hudibras, and deſcribing his perſon and habiliments, the author ſeems to labour with a tumultuous confuſion of diſſimilar ideas. He had read the hiſtory of the mock knights errant; he knew the notions and

and manners of a preſbyterian magiſtrate, and tried to unite the abſurdities of both, however diſtant, in one perſonage. Thus he gives him that pedantick oſtentation of knowledge which has no relation to chivalry, and loads him with martial encumbrances that can add nothing to his civil dignity. He ſends him out *a colonelling*, and yet never brings him within ſight of war.

If Hudibras be conſidered as the repreſentative of the Preſbyterians, it is not eaſy to ſay why his weapons ſhould be repreſented as ridiculous or uſeleſs; for, whatever judgement might be paſſed upon their knowledge or their arguments, experience had ſufficiently ſhown

that their ſwords were not to be deſpiſed.

The hero, thus compounded of ſwaggerer and pedant, of knight and juſtice, is led forth to action, with his ſquire Ralpho, an Independant enthuſiaſt.

Of the contexture of events planned by the author, which is called the action of the poem, ſince it is left imperfect, no judgement can be made. It is probable that the hero was to be led through many luckleſs adventures, which would give occaſion, like his attack upon the *bear and fiddle*, to expoſe the ridiculous rigour of the ſectaries; like his encounter with Sidrophel and Whacum, to make ſuperſtition and credulity contemptible; or, like his recourſe

to

to the low retailer of the law, diſcover the fraudulent practices of different profeſſions.

What ſeries of events he would have formed, or in what manner he would have rewarded or puniſhed his hero, it is now vain to conjecture. His work muſt have had, as it ſeems, the defect which Dryden imputes to Spenſer; the action could not have been one; there could only have been a ſucceſſion of incidents, each of which might have happened without the reſt, and which could not all co-operate to any ſingle concluſion.

The diſcontinuity of the action might however have been eaſily forgiven, if there had been action enough; but I

believe every reader regrets the paucity of events, and complains that in the poem of Hudibras, as in the hiſtory of Thucydides, there is more ſaid than done. The ſcenes are too ſeldom changed, and the attention is tired with long converſation.

It is indeed much more eaſy to form dialogues than to contrive adventures. Every poſition makes way for an argument, and every objection dictates an anſwer. When two diſputants are engaged upon a complicated and extenſive queſtion, the difficulty is not to continue but to end the controverſy. But whether it be that we comprehend but few of the poſſibilities of life, or that life itſelf affords little variety, every

man

man who has tried knows how much labour it will coſt to form ſuch a combination of circumſtances, as ſhall have at once the grace of novelty and credibility, and delight fancy without violence to reaſon.

Perhaps the dialogue of this poem is not perfect. Some power of engaging the attention might have been added to it, by quicker reciprocation, by ſeaſonable interruptions, by ſudden queſtions, and by a nearer approach to dramatic ſpritelineſs; without which, fictitious ſpeeches will always tire, however ſparkling with ſentences, and however variegated with alluſions.

The great ſource of pleaſure is variety. Uniformity muſt tire at laſt,

though it be uniformity of excellence. We love to expect; and, when expectation is diſappointed or gratified, we want to be again expecting. For this impatience of the preſent, whoever would pleaſe, muſt make proviſion. The ſkilful writer *irritat, mulcet,* makes a due diſtribution of the ſtill and animated parts. It is for want of this artful intertexture, and thoſe neceſſary changes, that the whole of a book may be tedious, though all the parts are praiſed.

If unexhauſtible wit could give perpetual pleaſure, no eye would ever leave half-read the work of Butler; for what poet has ever brought ſo many remote images ſo happily together? It is ſcarce-

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ly poſſible to peruſe a page without finding ſome aſſociation of images that was never found before. By the firſt paragraph the reader is amuſed, by the next he is delighted, and by a few more ſtrained to aſtoniſhment; but aſtoniſhment is a toilſome pleaſure: he is ſoon weary of wondering, and longs to be diverted.

Omnia vult belle Matho dicere, dic aliquando
Et bene, dic neutrum, dic aliquando male.

Imagination is uſeleſs without knowledge: nature gives in vain the power of combination, unleſs ſtudy and obſervation ſupply materials to be combined.

Butler's

Butler's treaſures of knowledge appear proportioned to his expence: whatever topick employs his mind, he ſhews himſelf qualified to expand and illuſtrate it with all the acceſſories that books can furniſh: he is found not only to have travelled the beaten road, but the bye-paths of literature; not only to have taken general ſurveys, but to have examined particulars with minute inſpection.

If the French boaſt the learning of Rabelais, we need not be afraid of confronting them with Butler.

But the moſt valuable parts of his performance are thoſe which retired ſtudy and native wit cannot ſupply. He that merely makes a book from books may be

be uſeful, but can ſcarcely be great. Butler had not ſuffered life to glide beſide him unſeen or unobſerved. He had watched with great diligence the operations of human nature, and traced the effects of opinion, humour, intereſt, and paſſion. From ſuch remarks proceeded that great number of ſententious diſtichs which have paſſed into converſation, and are added as proverbial axioms to the general ſtock of practical knowledge.

When any work has been viewed and admired, the firſt queſtion of intelligent curioſity is, how was it performed? Hudibras was not a haſty effuſion; it was not produced by a ſudden tumult of imagination, or a ſhort paroxyſm of violent

violent labour. To accumulate ſuch a maſs of ſentiments at the call of accidental deſire, or of ſudden neceſſity, is beyond the reach and power of the moſt active and comprehenſive mind. I am informed by Mr. Thyer of Mancheſter, the excellent editor of this author's reliques, that he could ſhew ſomething like Hudibras in proſe. He has in his poſſeſſion the common-place book, in which Butler repoſited, not ſuch events or precepts as are gathered by reading; but ſuch remarks, ſimilitudes, alluſions, aſſemblages, or inferences, as occaſion prompted, or meditation produced; thoſe thoughts that were generated in his own mind, and might be uſefully applied to ſome future purpoſe. Such

is the labour of thoſe who write for immortality.

But human works are not eaſily found without a periſhable part. Of the ancient poets every reader feels the mythology tedious and oppreſſive. Of Hudibras the manners, being founded on opinions, are temporary and local, and therefore become every day leſs intelligible and leſs ſtriking. What Cicero ſays of philoſophy is true likewiſe of wit and humour, that "time effaces "the fictions of opinion, and confirms "the determinations of Nature." Such manners as depend upon ſtanding relations and general paſſions are co-extended with the race of man; but thoſe modifications of life, and peculiarities of

of practice, which are the progeny of error and perverſeneſs, or at beſt of ſome accidental influence or tranſient perſuaſion, muſt periſh with their parents.

Much therefore of that humour which tranſported the laſt century with merriment is loſt to us, who do not know the ſour ſolemnity, the ſullen ſuperſtition, the gloomy moroſeneſs, and the ſtubborn ſcruples of the ancient Puritans; or, if we knew them, derive our information only from books, or from tradition, have never had them before our eyes, and cannot but by recollection and ſtudy underſtand the lines in which they are ſatiriſed. Our grandfathers knew the picture from the life;

we judge of the life by contemplating the picture.

It is ſcarcely poſſible, in the regularity and compoſure of the preſent time, to image the tumult of abſurdity, and clamour of contradiction, that perplexed doctrine, and diſturbed both publick and private quiet, in that age, when ſubordination was broken, and awe was hiſſed away; when any unſettled innovator who could hatch a half-formed notion produced it to the publick; when every man might become a preacher, and almoſt every preacher could collect a congregation.

The wiſdom of the nation is very reaſonably ſuppoſed to reſide in the parliament. What can be concluded

of

of the lower claſſes of the people, when in one of the parliaments ſummoned by Cromwell it was ſeriouſly propoſed, that all the records in the Tower ſhould be burnt, that all memory of things paſt ſhould be effaced, and that the whole ſyſtem of life ſhould commence anew?

We have never been witneſſes of animoſities excited by the uſe of minced pies and plumb porridge; nor ſeen with what abhorrence thoſe who could eat them at all other times of the year would ſhrink from them in December. An old Puritan, who was alive in my childhood, being at one of the feaſts of the church invited by a neighbour to partake his cheer, told him, that, if he would treat him at an alehouſe with beer

beer, brewed for all times and ſeaſons, he ſhould accept his kindneſs, but would have none of his ſuperſtitious meats or drinks.

One of the puritanical tenets was the illegality of all games of chance; and he that reads Gataker upon *Lots*, may ſee how much learning and reaſon one of the firſt ſcholars of his age thought neceſſary, to prove that it was no crime to throw a die, or play at cards, or to hide a ſhilling for the reckoning.

Aſtrology however, againſt which ſo much of this ſatire is directed, was not more the folly of the Puritans than of others. It had in that time a very extenſive dominion. Its predictions raiſed hopes and fears in minds which ought

to have rejected it with contempt. In hazardous undertakings, care was taken to begin under the influence of a propitious planet; and when the king was priſoner in Cariſbrook Caſtle, an aſtrologer was conſulted what hour would be found moſt favourable to an eſcape.

What effect this poem had upon the publick, whether it ſhamed impoſture or reclaimed credulity, is not eaſily determined. Cheats can ſeldom ſtand long againſt laughter. It is certain that the credit of planetary intelligence wore faſt away; though ſome men of knowledge, and Dryden among them, continued to believe that conjunctions and oppoſitions had a great part in the diſ-

tribution of good or evil, and in the government of ſublunary things.

Poetical Action ought to be probable upon certain ſuppoſitions, and ſuch probability as burleſque requires is here violated only by one incident. Nothing can ſhew more plainly the neceſſity of doing ſomething, and the difficulty of finding ſomething to do, than that Butler was reduced to transfer to his hero the flagellation of Sancho, not the moſt agreeable fiction of Cervantes; very ſuitable indeed to the manners of that age and nation, which aſcribed wonderful efficacy to voluntary penances; but ſo remote from the practice and opinions of the Hudibraſtick time, that judgement and imagination are alike offended.

The Diction of this poem is grofly familiar, and the numbers purpoſely neglected, except in a few places where the thoughts by their native excellence ſecure themſelves from violation, being ſuch as mean language cannot expreſs. The mode of verſification has been blamed by Dryden, who regrets that the heroic meaſure was not rather choſen. To the critical ſentence of Dryden the higheſt reverence would be due, were not his deciſions often precipitate, and his opinions immature. When he wiſhed to change the meaſure, he probably would have been willing to change more. If he intended that, when the numbers were heroick, the diction ſhould ſtill remain vulgar,

he

he planned a very heterogeneous and unnatural compoſition. If he preferred a general ſtatelineſs both of ſound and words, he can be only underſtood to wiſh that Butler had undertaken a different work.

The meaſure is quick, ſpritely, and colloquial, ſuitable to the vulgarity of the words and the levity of the ſentiments. But ſuch numbers and ſuch diction can gain regard only when they are uſed by a writer whoſe vigour of fancy and copiouſneſs of knowledge entitle him to contempt of ornaments, and who, in confidence of the novelty and juſtneſs of his conceptions, can afford to throw metaphors and epithets away. To another that conveys common thoughts

thoughts in careleſs verſification, it will only be ſaid, "Pauper videri Cinna vult, & eſt pauper." The meaning and diction will be worthy of each other, and criticiſm may juſtly doom them to periſh together.

Nor, even though another Butler ſhould ariſe, would another Hudibras obtain the ſame regard. Burleſque conſiſts in a diſproportion between the ſtile and the ſentiments, or between the adventitious ſentiments and the fundamental ſubject. It therefore, like all bodies compounded of heterogeneous parts, contains in it a principle of corruption. All diſproportion is unnatural, and from what is unnatural we can derive only the pleaſure which novelty produces.

We

We admire it awhile as a ſtrange thing; but, when it is no longer ſtrange, we perceive its deformity. It is a kind of artifice, which by frequent repetition detects itſelf; and the reader, learning in time what he is to expect, lays down his book, as the ſpectator turns away from a ſecond exhibition of thoſe tricks, of which the only uſe is to ſhew that they can be played.

JAN 7 1935